
THE
Bishop of *L O N D O N*'s
Second Pastoral Letter

TO THE
People of his Diocese.



THE
Bishop of LONDON

Second Letter

People of his Diocese

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THE *Gibson (Edmund)*
Bishop of L O N D O N's
Second Pastoral Letter
TO THE
P E O P L E
OF HIS
DIOCESE;

Particularly, to those of the two
great Cities of *London* and *Westminster*.

Occasion'd by some late Writings, in
which it is asserted, " That REA-
SON is a sufficient Guide in Mat-
ters of Religion, without the Help of
REVELATION.

THE^c FIFTH EDITION.

L O N D O N.

Printed for SAM. BUCKLEY, in *Amen-
Corner*. 1731. Price 1 s.

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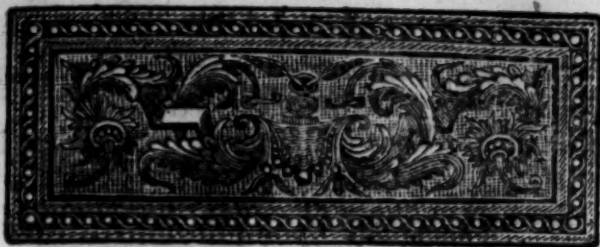


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The BISHOP of *London's*

Second Pastoral Letter, &c.

Occasion'd by some late Writings, in which it is asserted, "That REASON is a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, without the Help of REVELATION.



HE Arguments that have been used to support the Cause of Infidelity, may be reduced to two general Heads; one, That there is not *sufficient Evidence* of the Truth and Authority of the Gospel-Revelation; the other, That Reason being a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, there was no *Need* of such a Revelation. The Tendency of the first is to persuade Men to *reject* the Gospel; and the Tendency of the second, to satisfy them that they may without danger or inconvenience *lay aside* and *neglect* it; and wherever

either of these Arguments prevails, the Work of Infidelity is effectually carry'd on.

To prevent your being seduc'd or shaken by any Suggestion that the Evidences of the Truth and Authority of the Christian Revelation are not full and sufficient, I endeavour'd in my first Letter to bring those Evidences into as narrow a Compass as I could; that, having set them before you in one View and in their united Strength, you might be able to judge for your selves. And as a Chain of Evidences so plain and forcible, cannot fail to establish every unprejudic'd Mind in a firm Belief that the Gospel-Revelation was from God; so, when that is once establish'd, no Suggestion either against the *Need* of such a Revelation, or against our *Obligation* to receive it, ought to make any Impression upon you; because, to suppose that God makes a Revelation which is *needless*, is a direct Impeachment of his *Wisdom*; and to affirm that we are not bound to attend to and receive it, when made, is no less an Impeachment of his *Authority*.

But since the Infidels of our Age are endeavouring to lead Men into a disregard of all Revelation, by magnifying the Strength of Natural Reason, and recommending it as a full and sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, and from thence infer, that the Means of Salvation directed by the Gospel, notwithstanding all the Evidences of their being God's own Appointment, are to be laid aside as Superstitions and human Inventions, and every Man is to have the framing of his own Religion; Since also there is great Cause to apprehend,

prehend, that many may give too favourable Entertainment to a Scheme which thus flatters the Pride of human Understanding, and which by lessening or removing the Terrors of the Gospel, shakes off the Restraints that are most uneasy to the Corruptions of Nature : For these Reasons, it highly concerns those who have the Care of Souls, to guard them against such fatal Errors ; first, by convincing them of the Insufficiency of Natural Reason to be a Guide in Religion and by Consequence of the Need of a Divine Revelation and our Obligations to attend to it ; and then, by setting before them the peculiar Excellencies and Advantages of the *Christian* Revelation, and the great Sinfulness of *Rejecting* it. Of these, and some other Points which naturally fall in with them, I will endeavour to give you a full and clear View, under the following Heads :

1. The true and proper Use of Reason, with regard to Revelation.
2. The Insufficiency of Reason to be a Guide in Religion.
3. The great Need, and Expedience, of a Divine Revelation for that End.
4. The Obligation we are under to *Enquire* whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of it's coming from God.

5. The

5. The Duty of Mankind to *Receive* for their Guide, whatever Revelation comes from God; and to receive it *whole and entire*.

6. The peculiar Excellencies of the *Christian* Revelation.

7. The great Sinfulness and Danger of *Re-jecting* this Revelation.

I. *Of the true and proper Use of Reason, with Regard to Revelation.* Those among us who have labour'd of late Years to set up Reason against Revelation, would make it pass for an establish'd Truth, that if you will embrace Revelation, you must of course quit your Reason; which, if it were true, would doubtless be a strong Prejudice against Revelation. But so far is this from being true, that it is universally acknowledg'd that Revelation itself is to stand or fall by the test of Reason, or, in other Words, according as Reason finds the Evidences of it's coming from God, to be or not to be sufficient and conclusive, and the Matter of it to contradict, or not contradict, the natural Notions which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the essential Differences between Good and Evil. And when Reason, upon an impartial Examination, finds the Evidences to be full and sufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be receiv'd, and as a necessary Consequence thereof, directs us to give up ourselves to the Guidance of it. But here Reason stops; not as *set aside* by Revelation,
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tion, but as taking Revelation for it's Guide, and not thinking itself at Liberty to call in question the *Wisdom*, and *Expedience* of any Part, after it is satisfy'd that the whole comes from God; any more than to object against it, as containing some things, the *Manner*, *End* and *Design* of which it cannot fully comprehend. These were the wise and pious Sentiments of an ingenious Writer of our own Time; ' I Lock, Vol. 1. p. 573.
 ' gratefully receive and rejoyce in the Light
 ' of Revelation, which sets me at Rest in
 ' many Things, the *Manner* whereof my
 ' poor Reason can by no Means make out to
 ' me. And elsewhere, having laid it down for Lock, Vol. 1. p. 334.
 ' a general Maxim, ' That Reason must be our
 ' last Judge and Guide in every Thing; he immediately adds, ' I do not mean, that we must
 ' consult Reason, and examine whether a Proposition reveal'd from God, can be made out by
 ' Natural Principles, and if it cannot, that then
 ' we may reject it. But consult it we must,
 ' and by it examine whether it be a Revelation from God, or no. And if Reason finds it
 ' to be reveal'd from God, Reason then declares
 ' for it, as much as for any other Truth, and
 ' makes it one of her *Dictates*. Which is in Effect what St. Peter means, when he commands Christians to *be always ready to give a* 1. Pet. 3. 15.
 Reason of the Hope that is in them.

Agreeably to this, the Bounds of Reason and Faith are laid out by the same Writer, as Lock, p. 326.
 follows: ' Reason (says he) as contradistinct
 ' guish'd to Faith, I take to be the Discovery
 ' of the Certainty or Probability of such Propositions or Truths, which the Mind arrives
 ' at by *Deduction* made from Ideas which
 ' it

Lock, V. 1.
p. 331.

Ibid.
p. 329.

Ibid.

‘ it has got by the use of its *natural* Faculties,
 ‘ *viz.* by Sensation, or Reflection. *Faith* on
 ‘ the other Side, is the Assent to any Propo-
 ‘ sition not thus made out by the Deductions
 ‘ of Reason, but upon the Credit of the Propo-
 ‘ ser, as coming from *God* in some *extraordina-*
 ‘ *ry* Way of Communication.--- And again;
 ‘ *Reason* is *natural Revelation*, whereby the
 ‘ eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of
 ‘ all Knowledge, communicates to Mankind
 ‘ that Portion of Truth, which he has laid
 ‘ within the Reach of their natural Faculties;
 ‘ *Revelation* is *natural Reason Enlarged* by a
 ‘ new Set of Discoveries communicated by
 ‘ *God* immediately, which Reason vouches
 ‘ the Truth of by the Testimony and Proof it
 ‘ gives, that they come from *God*.--- And
 ‘ elsewhere, ‘ Thus far the Dominion of
 ‘ Faith reaches, and that without any Violence
 ‘ or Hindrance to Reason; which is not injur’d
 ‘ or disturb’d, but assisted and improved, by
 ‘ *new Discoveries* of Truth, coming from the
 ‘ eternal Fountain of Knowledge.--- And,
 ‘ Whatsoever is divine Revelation, ought to
 ‘ over-rule all our Opinions, Prejudices, and
 ‘ Interests, and hath a Right to be receiv’d
 ‘ with *full Assent*. Such a Submission as this,
 ‘ of our Reason to Faith, takes not away the
 ‘ Land-marks of Knowledge : This shakes
 ‘ not the Foundation of Reason, but leaves
 ‘ us that Use of our Faculties, for which they
 ‘ were given.

So little did this acute Writer dream of
 the new Notions which have been since in-
 vented, to support the Cause of Infidelity,
 ‘ That

‘ That God cannot, consistently with the *Immutability* of his Nature, make any *new* Revelation [tho’ to *mutable* Creatures] by way of *Addition* to the original Law of Nature ; ‘ That the making any such new Revelation, would be to deal with his Creatures in an *arbitrary* Manner, ‘ That no Evidence from Miracles or other external Testimonies, upon which any new Revelation claims to be received as coming from God, are to be at all regarded ; and, ‘ That the *Matter* of such a Revelation is not to be attended to by any Man, further than *He* sees the *Fitness* and *Wisdom* of it, and can suppose it to be Part of the original Law of Nature ; that is, it is not to be regarded or attended to at all, as a *Revelation*. -- But this, by the way.

II. *Reason, of itself, is an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.* But before I proceed directly to the Proof of this, I must caution you against several fallacious Arguings upon this Point, by which you may otherwise be deceiv’d and impos’d on.

One is, the Arguing from the Powers of Reason in a State of *Innocence*, in which the Understanding is supposed to be clear and strong, and the Judgment unbiass’d and free from the Influences of inordinate Appetites and Inclinations ; to the Powers and Abilities of Reason under the present *corrupt* State of human Nature : In which, we find by Experience how often we are deceiv’d, even in Things before our Eyes and the common Affairs of human Life ; and more particularly, in the Case of Religion, how apt our Judgment would be to follow the bent of our Passions and Appetites,
and

and to model our Duty according to their Motions and Desires, if God had left this wholly to every one's Reason, and not given us a more plain and exprefs Revelation of his Will, to *check* and *balance* that Influence which our Passions and Appetites are found to have over our Reason and Judgment.

Another fallacious Way of Arguing is, that as Reason is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life, it may also be our Guide in Religion; and the Concerns of the next Life. Whereas in one, it has the Assistance of Sense, and Experience, and Observation, but in the other, it is left in great Measure to Conjecture and Speculation. Or if Reason were *equally capable* of making a Judgment upon Things of a temporal, and Things of a spiritual Nature; yet there will always be a very great Difference in the Degrees of *Attention* which the Generality of Men allow to Things Temporal and Things Spiritual, to Things Present and Things Future, to Things in View and Things out of Sight. So that it is usually seen, that the wiser Men are about the Things of this World, the less wise they are about the Things of the next; and as to the Sufficiency of Reason to be a Guide in Religion, it is much the same Thing with Regard to the generality of the World, whether Reason be *Uncapable* of framing a compleat Rule of Life, or the Generality be hinder'd by Pleasures or by Attendance on their worldly Affairs, from *Employing* their Reason to frame it; which will always be the Case of the greatest Part of Mankind.

In the next Place therefore, it is very unfair in those who deny the Need and Expedience
of

of a divine Revelation, to argue in favour of Reason, as if all Mankind were *Philosophers*, and every one had sufficient Capacity, Leisure and Inclination, to form a Scheme of Duties for the Direction of his own Life. For it is not enough to say, that there are learned Men in the World, who are *able* to form such Schemes; since, whatever their own Ability may be, they have no Right to *command* Assent and Obedience from others; nor can any one rationally receive and embrace their Schemes without following them through the Chain of Reasonings upon which they are built, and judging whether the Reasonings will support the Schemes; and further, (in case those learned Men *differ*,) without judging, which of them is in the right, and which in the wrong. A Task, that the Generality of Mankind are as unequal to, as they are to the framing the Schemes themselves. And the Difficulty is still greater, when we find the same Philosopher differing from himself; now advancing one Opinion, and then again leaning to another; at one Time *clear* and *positive*, at another Time *doubtful* and *wavering*, upon the very same Point; in which Case, his Opinion on either Side, can amount to no more in the Result, than to prove him a Guide very unfit for the People to follow.

No less unfair is it, to interpret the Zeal that is shown for Reveal'd Religion, as a *Disregard* of Morality. This is so far from being true, that the Advocates of Revelation always consider the whole Body of the Moral Law, as an essential Part of the Christian Institution; which is so far from having abolished Morality, that it enjoins and enforces the Practice of it,

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upon higher Motives, for more noble Ends, and to greater Degrees of Perfection, than any Scheme of *mere* Morality ever did; as will be shown more at large in this Letter. But at the same time it is laid down by them as an undoubted Truth, ' That God has a Right to prescribe the Terms and Conditions upon which he will grant Pardon and Favour to Mankind, ' That he has fully and clearly declared in the Gospel, what those Terms and Conditions are, and, ' That therefore it is great Presumption and a vain Hope to expect Pardon and Salvation in any other Way. And to say, in this View, that the Precepts of Morality, as the Product of mere natural Reason, are not a sufficient Guide to Salvation, cannot with any Justice be call'd a *Disregard* of Morality.

No more can the Reverence we pay to the Revelation of the Scriptures as a *divine* Direction, be call'd a *Disregard* of *Philosophy* as the Product of *natural* Reason. Persons of Leisure, Capacity and Attention, in any Age, might easily learn from Observation and Experience, that an immoderate Indulgence of the Appetites was hurtful to the Body and Estate, and a like Indulgence of the Passions equally prejudicial to the inward Peace of the Mind, and the outward Order and Regularity of the World. And while Mankind had no other Light, the Philosophers employed their Time worthily, in drawing such Rules from Reason and Experience, as, being duly observ'd, might make the present Life more happy, or rather, what was the great End they aim'd at, less miserable. But then, as their Notions concerning another Life were at best confus'd and imperfect, and mere Reason could not inform them,

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with any Certainty, that this Life, with whatever befalls us in it, is a State of *Tryal* and *Probation* in order to another; they could not tell how to make the Pains, Miseries, and Misfortunes of this World, turn to our Account; nor by Consequence could they lay a sure and solid Foundation of Ease and Comfort against all Events. The Considerations which Philosophy suggests, to support us under the Pressures and Calamities of Life, are such as these; ' That they are the common Portion of Mankind, ' That it is possible Time may alter Things for the better, ' That at worst Death will put an End to them, and, ' That Impatience in the mean time will but increase them. The Rules of Revelation are, ' That whatever befalls us, is by the Appointment of a wise and good God, ' That he sees Afflictions necessary to wean us from the Love of this World, and to turn our Desires and Affections upon a much better, ' That he has promised either to deliver us from them, or support us under them, and by that has given us Ground for a full Trust and comfortable Hope in him; That our *Patience* under the afflicting Hand of God, is a fresh Endearment of us to him, and will be an Addition to our future Happiness, and, ' That in Point of Duration, the Sufferings of this Life are as nothing, when compared with an Eternity of Joy and Glory.

These, we say, are a much better Foundation of Ease and Comfort, than any Rules that the Philosophers either did or could lay down; but in saying this, we do not condemn the Rules of Philosophy upon that or other Points, nor discourage Persons of Leisure and Capacity from entertaining themselves with them, not

only as an agreeable Diversion, but as an useful Exercise of the Mind; some Things in them being truly Great, and what we justly admire in *Heathens*, as tending to raise the Soul above the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Earth. But then we say, that the Study of those Writings is become useless and unnecessary to the Generality of People, since Revelation has furnished us with Rules and Precepts, both Moral and Divine, which are far more perfect in themselves, far more effectual for their several Ends, and establish'd by a far higher Authority, than any of the Rules and Sayings of the Philosophers can pretend to; and at the same time are plain and clear to the meanest Capacities.

This points out to us another Advantage which the Enemies of Revelation very unduly take, to advance the Strength and Power of natural Reason in Matters of Religion; and that is, the taking an Estimate of those Powers from Books upon the Subject of Morality, that have been written *since* the Christian Revelation was made; many of which are clear and uniform both in the Measures of Duty, and the Motives to the Performance of it. But this Clearness and Uniformity are really owing to the Light of Revelation, which has given us a far more exact Knowledge than we had before of the Nature and Attributes of God, from whence many of the Duties do immediately flow, and also a far greater Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments, as well as a clearer Conviction of the Necessity of Sobriety, Temperance, and other moral Virtues, as Preparations for our Happiness in the next Life, by perfecting our Natures in order to it. And therefore to judge rightly how far Reason is able to be a Guide

in Religion, we must form that Judgment upon the Writings of such of the ancient Philosophers, as appear not to have had any Knowledge either of the *Jewish* or the Christian Revelation; and then enquire, ' What Progress they were able to make in the Knowledge of Divine Matters, by the Strength of mere natural Reason, ' To what Degrees of *Certainty* concerning those Matters it could and did carry them, ' What Agreement and Uniformity there was among them, in the main and fundamental Doctrins and Duties of Religion, ' What was the natural Tendency of their several Doctrins, in order to the promoting of Virtue and Goodness, and ' What Influence they had in their several Ages and Countries, in rectifying the Principles and reforming the Practices of Mankind. For all which Purposes, it is but Justice to them to suppose, that they had *as* great Strength of Reason and Judgment, *as* sincere a Desire to find out the Truth, and *as* great Diligence in enquiring after it, as any of the Enemies of Revelation at this Day can pretend to. And if it shall appear, ' That they were utterly ignorant of many important Points in Religion, which Revelation has discovered to us, ' That their Knowledge of many others was *dark*, uncertain and imperfect, ' That the Differences among them, in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment, were endless and irreconcilable, ' That many of them taught Doctrins, which directly tend to promote Vice and Wickedness in the World, and, ' That in Fact the Influence they had in rectifying the Notions and reforming the Lives of Mankind, was inconsiderable; If, I say, these things appear, they will amount to a full Proof, that
natural

natural Reason, of itself, is not a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

I. The ancient Philosophers were utterly ignorant of many important Points in Religion, which Revelation has discovered to us.

Peripateticks.

Epicureans.

They were Strangers to the true Account of the Creation of the World, and the Original of Mankind, and to God's Administration of the World, and Intercourse with Mankind, in the most early Ages. One Sect of Philosophers held, that the World was *Eternal*, and another, that it was made by *Chance*; and they who believed it had a Beginning in Time, knew not by what Steps, nor in what Manner it was rais'd into so much Beauty and Order; and so, for want of a sure *historical* Knowledge concerning this Point, it became a fit Subject for the *Fancy* and *Imagination* of the Poets.

They were sensible of a great Degree of Corruption and Irregularity in the Nature of Man, but could not tell from what Cause it proceeded, nor in what State our first Parents came out of the Hands of God, nor by what Means they lost their original Perfection. And the want of knowing these Things, leads Men of course into endless Perplexities, how to reconcile the Purity and Perfection of God the Creator, to the Uncleanneſs and Corruption of Man the Being created; and tempts them to suppose, either that the Nature of God is not pure, or that the Soul of Man is not of a divine Original.

Much less could the Light of Nature acquaint them with the Method He has ordain'd and established for the Recovery of lost Man; 'to effect a Reconciliation between God and Man, 'to exercise his Goodness without the

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Violation of his Justice, and not only to make the Pardon of Sinners consistent with the Wisdom of his Government, the Honour of his Laws, and his Hatred of Sin, so as to render their Salvation *possible*, but to give them the strongest *Assurances* of Pardon and Favour, upon the plain Conditions of Faith and Repentance. These are things that depend wholly upon Revelation; and without the Knowledge of these, Mankind must remain in a perplexed and desponding State, as to the Pardon of Sin, and the Favour of God. The Comfort they would raise from the Mercy and Goodness of God is checkt by the Consideration of his Justice, and nothing is able to fix the guilty Mind in a State of solid and well-grounded Comfort, but an Assurance that the divine Justice is satisfied, and an express Declaration on the Part of God, upon what Terms and Conditions he will receive the Sinner into Favour.

Then as to the *Publick worship* of God; the Light of Nature might in general suggest to Men the *Reasonableness* of joyning in Worship; but in what manner he would be worshipped, and in what way they might perform a Service that would be acceptable to him, was understood to be a Point which the Wit and Penetration of Man could not fix and determin. Inso-much, that the Founders of States and Kingdoms, who undertook to settle *Civil Administrations* by the Rules of human Prudence, found it necessary to ground their Schemes of *Religion* upon pretended Revelations, as the only Way to give *them* a proper Sanction, and the *People* an Assurance, that their religious Performances would be accepted.

The Points of Knowledge mentioned under this first Head, are evidently such as the Philosophers were wholly ignorant of, as not falling within the Compass of human Reason in its corrupt State; and the Importance of them to the Comfort and Happiness of Mankind, shows the vast Advantage we receive from Revelation, 'in removing many Doubts and Difficulties which would otherwise arise concerning the Nature and Attributes of God, 'in showing us the true State of our own Original and Condition, and 'in acquainting us in the clearest Manner, upon what Terms, and by what Services, we may be sure of his Favour, and Acceptance. To all which we may add as another Point above the Reach of human Reason, The comfortable Promise he has made us of *supernatural* Aid and Assistance in our sincere Endeavours to perform what he has reveal'd to be his Will, in order to render ourselves acceptable to him.

2. The Knowledge which the Philosophers had of several important Points of Religion, was *dark, imperfect* and *uncertain*. Many of them, and those, of the greatest Note, laid it down for a general Maxim, 'That all Things were uncertain, 'That Truth lay buried in a deep Abyss, and, 'That the furthest that human Wit and Understanding could go in Search of it, was no more than Probability and Conjecture; and accordingly we find the wisest among them plainly intimating the Need there was of a Divine Revelation, to give Mankind a full and certain Knowledge of their Duty. But supposing them to have been able to lay out all the Duties and Offices of Life in the clearest Manner; that which disabled them from

Cic. Nat.
Deor. l. 1.
Acad. qu.
l. 1. Vid.
Minuc. Fel.
p. 112.
Lact. l. 3.
c. 20.
See under
the 3d ge-
neral
Head.

from *reforming* the World and obliging Men to *attend* to their Duty, was the *Uncertainty* they were under about the great and only effectual *Motives* to it, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Account.

Cicero enumerating the Opinions of Philosophers upon this Head, not only asserts what every one knows to be true, that the whole Sect of *Epicureans* disbeliev'd the Soul's Immortality, but adds, That many of the most learned Philosophers were of the same Opinion; and he particularly mentions two of great Note among them; one, who in his Writings had avowedly argued against it, and another who had professedly written three Books to confute it. He tells us further, that though the *Stoicks* believed that the Soul remain'd after Death for some Time, yet they did not believe it was immortal. And even *Socrates* and *Cicero*, who were peculiarly favourable to the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, do yet discover some Doubt and Uncertainty about it.

Socrates, a little before his Death, tells his Friends, 'He had good Hope of some Sort of Being, when this Life was at an End'; but after that, he speaks doubtfully, and says, 'Tho' he should be mistaken, he did at least gain thus much, That the Expectation of it made him less uneasy while he liv'd, and his Error would die with him; and he concludes, 'I am going out of the World, and you are to continue in it; which of us has the better Part, is a Secret to every one but God.

And *Cicero*, speaking of the several Opinions concerning the Nature and Duration of the Soul, says, 'Which of these is true, God alone knows; and which is most probable, a

Cic. Tusc.

q. l. 1.

Plato in

Phaed.

In Apol.

Socratis.

Cic. Tusc.

q. l. 1.

Sen. Ep.
102.

‘ very great Question.’ And he introduces one, complaining, ‘ That while he was reading the Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul, he thought himself convinced ; but as soon as he laid aside the Book, and began to reason with himself, his Conviction was gone.’ All which gave *Seneca* just Occasion to say, ‘ That Immortality, however desir’d, was rather *promis’d* than *prov’d*, by those great Men. And if the Philosophers doubted even of the Existence of the Soul after Death, much less could they pretend to know any thing of the Resurrection of the Body, and a solemn Day of Judgment, and the Sentence that will be finally pronounc’d upon Good and Bad Men at that Day. So far from this, that the great Argument by which they prove that Death cannot properly speaking be call’d an Evil, is, ‘ That it either wholly extinguishes our Being, or at least leaves us such a Being as is not subject to Punishment or Misery in another State. And they eas’d the People of those Fears, by exploding the Notion of *Infernal Torments* prepar’d for the Wicked, as mere Dreams, and Fictions of the Poets.

Plut. de
Aud. Poet.
Cic. Tusc.
q. 1. 1.
Sen. ad.
Marc. c.
19.

This Uncertainty about those great and fundamental Truths, was attended with fatal Effects both in *Principle* and *Practice* : In Principle, it naturally led Mankind to call in question the Providence, Justice, and Goodness of God, when they observ’d the Prosperity of the wicked, and the Calamities of the Righteous, without being sure that either of them should suffer or be rewarded in another State ; or else to doubt, whether there really was any essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, and whether it did not depend wholly upon the

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Institution of Men. In *Practice* ; Hope and Fear are the two Things which chiefly govern Mankind and Influence them in their Actions ; and they must of course govern and influence more or less, in Proportion to the *Certainty* there is, that the Things fear'd and hop'd for are real, and the Rewards and Punishments assuredly to be expected. And as the corrupt Inclinations of human Nature will easily overcome any Fear, the Foundation of which is but doubtful ; so those being let loose and freed from the Apprehension of a future Account, will of course carry Men into all Manner of Wickedness. Nor is it sufficient to say, that they are under the Restraint of *human* Laws ; since it is certain, that very great Degrees of Wickedness may both be harbour'd in the Heart and carried into Execution, notwithstanding the utmost that human Authority can do to prevent it.

From hence it appears, how great a Blessing and Benefit it is to Mankind, that the Gospel-Revelation has given us a full Assurance of the Immortality of the Soul, and of Rewards and Punishments in another Life, according to our Behaviour in this ; and not only so, but has very particularly acquainted us, ' Who shall be our Judge. ' What the Manner and Solemnity of the Judgment, ' What is to be the Rule of Judging, ' What the Sentence that will be pass'd both upon Good and Bad Men, and ' What will be the State of each in Consequence thereof. The certain Expectation of these things, enforce'd by the Assurance God has given us that he takes Notice of all our Thoughts, Words and Actions in this Life, in order to that future Account, conduces greatly, or rather is of

absolute Necessity, to secure the general Peace and Order of the World, as well as to preserve the Virtue and Innocence of particular Persons.

3. The Differences among the Philosophers in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment, were endless, and irreconcilable. This is a Truth so well known, and so universally acknowledged, that those among us who have the greatest Zeal for natural Reason as a sufficient Guide in Religion, will not deny the Fact. A lively Description of which, we find in an ancient Writer of the Church, 'Every Sect of them overthrows all others, in order to establish itself, and can allow none to be wise, because by that it would acknowledge itself to be foolish; and as it overthrows the Rest, so is itself overthrown by the Rest.' And elsewhere, 'To what End should we fight against those, who are *destroying* one another?' Nor can it be said, that these Differences were only about Matters of less Consequence; since it is notorious, that the most *important* Points in Religion were Subjects of the greatest Disputes. While some asserted the Being of a God, others openly deny'd it; and others again ran into the Notion of a *Multiplicity* of Gods, Celestial, Aerial, Terrestrial, Infernal; * and as every Country had its peculiar Gods, so the Philosophers made it a general Rule, that every one should Worship the Gods of his own Country. While some (as I have shown) were willing to believe that the Soul was immortal, and that they should live in a future State, others affirm'd it to be mortal, and to die with the Body: While some affirm'd that Virtue and Vice, as founded in the Nature of Things, were eternal and unchangeable; it
- was
- Laet. l. 3.
c. 4.
- c. 28.
- Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.
* Plato, de Leg. l. 4.
Epict.
Ench. c. 38.
Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 3.
— de Leg. l. 2.
Diog. Laert. l. 2. p. 89.
134, 138.
l. 9. p. 581.
l. 10. p. 671.
- Max, Tyr. Diss. 1. Sen. Ep. l. 10. p. 97, 1302.

was the Doctrine of others, that nothing was Good or Evil, Just or Unjust, Right or Wrong, otherwise than as the Laws and Customs of particular Countries determin'd : While one Sect Stoicks affirm'd that Virtue was the sole Good, and its own Reward ; another Sect rejecting that Notion in the Case of Virtue in *Distress*, made the good Things of this Life a *necessary* Ingredient of Happiness ; and a third set up *Pleasures*, or at least Indolence and a Freedom from Pain, as the final Good that Men ought to propose to themselves ; (upon which *Differences Tully* very justly observes, " That they who " do not agree in stating what is the *chief End* " or *Good*, must of course differ in the *whole* " *System* of Precepts for the Conduct of Life.") Again, While many of them thought it reasonable to believe, that the general Order and Government of the World could not be maintain'd without the Superintendence of some superior Power ; one whole Sect absolutely deny'd a Providence ; others acknowledged no more than a † general Providence which did not respect particular Beings ; others, who own'd a particular Providence, extended it only to * greater Matters, while the less, in their Opinion, were neglected ; others again deny'd the † Omniscience of God, which was little less than the denial of a Providence as to the Effects it ought to have upon the Behaviour of Mankind. And while some talked of their Gods taking *Vengeance* upon the Bad and rewarding the Good, in order to deter Men from Wickedness and excite them to Goodness ; others exploded the Notion of the Gods being * *pleas'd* or *displeas'd* on any Account, and by that, entirely remov'd out of the Minds of Men the *Desire* of pleasing and the *Fear* of

Aristoteli-
ans.Epicu-
reans.Cic. Acad.
qu. l. 1.
— de Fin.
l. 5.Epicu-
reans.Aristote-
lians.— † Plut.
de Pl. Phil.
l. 2. c. 3.Diog.
Laert. l. 5.— Arian.
Epiet. l. 1.
c. 12.* Cic. de
Nat. Deor.
l. 2. & c. 3.† Cic. Nat.
Deor. l. 1.
De Div. l. 2.De Fato.
Min. Fel.
p. 10. Var.

* Laët. de

Laet. de
Ira. c. 6.

Cic. Offic.
l. 3.

displeasing them, and all Thoughts of praying to them or thanking them, for the Benefits they either wanted, or enjoy'd. Upon which, it is justly observ'd by an ancient Christian Writer, That if this Principle of God's being neither pleas'd nor displeas'd, were true, there must be an End of all Religion ; since it leaves no Foundation either for *honouring* or *fearing* the Deity. And yet it is said to have been the universal Opinion of Philosophers (not only of those who thought that God did not concern himself with human Affairs, but of those who believ'd he did) that he was neither *angry* with Men, nor would *punish* them.

These and the other Differences among them which would fill Volumes, are not mention'd as any Reproach to the Philosophers in Point of Ability and Understanding ; since it happen'd no otherwise to them, than it always will do to any Number of Men, who in this corrupt State of Things will depend upon themselves alone, in Matters of Religion. But I mention them, to show the Weakness and Folly of those, who, because the Philosophers now and then indulg'd themselves in Speculations of a Divine Nature, would send us to them for a *complete* and *uniform* Scheme of Religion ; who, from their having laid down many useful Rules, grounded upon the natural Connexion of Things as they appear in daily Experience and Observation, in order to the wise Conduct of human Affairs and our Peace and Happiness in this Life, would infer, that they are therefore proper and sufficient Guides to our Happiness in the next ; and who, in reality, under this pretext, are doing all they can to gratify and encourage the voluptuous

Part

Part of Mankind, by discharging them from all Regard to the Laws of Christ (which have the Sanction of Divine Authority, and against which there can be no Objection, but that they are too pure for Appetites so much vitiated and deprav'd,) and leaving them to form a Religion for themselves out of this or that Philosopher, whose Maxims and Doctrins they can best Relish; the Wifest of which, (how *sublime* soever some of the Thoughts may seem) were no more than the Imaginations and Conjectures of fallible Men.

But be their Schemes of Religion what they would, these two Things are certain; ' That no one Philosopher had more Right than another, to impose his Scheme upon Mankind; and, ' That setting aside Revelation, no one Person at this Day has any Authority to determin, amidst so many different and contradictory Opinions, which of the Philosophers was in the Right, and which in the Wrong. Upon this Foot therefore the greatest Part of Mankind are left in a State of endless Perplexity, without Ability to determin for themselves, and without any certain Guide on whose Determination they may safely rely. And this made one of the best and wifest among them say, ' That ' Error was so mix'd with Truth, and oft-times ' with such likeness to each other, that there ' was no way left to determin the Judgment; ' and, ' That it would be Time enough to blame ' the *Sceptick* Philosophy which *doubted* of ' every thing, when either the Rest of the ' Philosophers were agreed, or some one should ' be found who could ascertain the Truth.'

Which shows the great Advantage of a *divine Revelation*, as well to ascertain our Duty,

Cic. *de*
Nat. Deor.
l. 1.

Ibid.
Academicks.

as to engage our Attention and Regard to it ; to give all Men, great and small, learned and unlearned, a sure Rule, and a clear View of all they are to do, and effectually to engage them in a steady and uniform Pursuit of the great End that such a Revelation proposes.

By attending to the Matters wherein the Philosophers differ'd, we see clearly that they were Points which concern'd the very *Being* of Religion and Virtue ; and that those Differences render'd the Motives and Obligations to both, precarious and uncertain. And this shows how unjust the Objection is, which Infidels raise upon this Head, from the different Opinions among Christians, and the several Sects and Denominations form'd upon those Differences. As long as Men are Men, and have different Degrees of Understanding, and every one a Partiality to his own Conceptions ; it is not to be expected, that they should agree in any one entire Scheme and every Part of it, in the Circumstances as well as the Substance, in the Manner of Things as well as in the Things themselves. The Question therefore is not in general about a Difference in Opinion, which in our present State is unavoidable, but about the Weight and Importance of the Things wherein Christians differ and the Things wherein they agree. And it will appear, that the several Denominations of Christians agree both in the Substance of Religion, and in the necessary Enforcements of the Practice of it : ' That the World and all Things in it were created by God, and are under the Direction and Government of his all-powerful Hand and all-seeing Eye : That there is an essential Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue

and

and Vice ; ' That there will be a State of future Rewards and Punishments according to our Behaviour in this Life ; ' That Christ was a Teacher sent from God, and that his Apostles were divinely inspir'd ; ' That all Christians are bound to *declare* and *profess* themselves to be his Disciples ; ' That not only the Exercise of the several Virtues, but also a Belief in Christ, is necessary in order to their obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, and Eternal Life ; ' That the Worship of God is to be perform'd chiefly by the Heart, in Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings ; and as to all other Points, ' That they are bound to live by the Rules which Christ and his Apostles have left them in the Holy Scriptures. Here then is a fixt, certain, and uniform Rule of Faith and Practice, containing all the most necessary Points of Religion, established by a divine Sanction, embrac'd as such by all Denominations of Christians, and in itself abundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of Religion in the World. As to Points of greater Intricacy, and which require uncommon Degrees of Penetration and Knowledge ; such indeed have been Subjects of Dispute among Persons of *Study* and *Learning* in the several Ages of the Christian Church ; but the *People* are not obliged to enter into them, so long as they do not touch the *Foundations* of Christianity, nor have an Influence upon *Practice*. In other Points, it is sufficient that they believe the Doctrins, so far as they find, upon due Enquiry and Examination according to their several Abilities and Opportunities, that God has reveal'd them. Now this is a State of Things very different from that of the Heathen

D.

World ;

Laſt. l. 3.
c. 27.

World ; in which their Teachers differ'd about the moſt important Points in Religion ; and while no one could claim an Authority from God, nor any Right to require an Aſſent to his Doctrins : The Generality of People had no certain Teſt to try them by, nor by Conſequence any Means to deliver themſelves out of a Maze of endless Doubt and Uncertainty. Which is well expreſs'd by an ancient Writer, in Answer to the Queſtion, Did the Philoſophers then teach Nothing that was right ? Yes, ſays he, ' many Things ; but their Precepts have no *Weight*, becauſe they are human, and want ' a divine Sanction.' They are not believ'd, becauſe ' he who hears, thinks himſelf a Man, ' as well as he who teaches.

Stoicks.

4. The Philoſophers taught Doctrins, which directly tend to encourage Vice and Wickedneſs in the World. Of this ſort, were the Notions already mentioned, concerning Providence, and the Omniſcience and Omnipreſence of God, and their denying that he was either pleas'd or displeas'd with Mankind, and their reſolving the Diſtinctions between Good and Evil into Human Authority and Appointment. Such alſo was the Doctrin of *Fate*, or Men's doing every thing thro' *Necceſſity*, and not by *Choice* ; which takes away all Virtue and Vice, and leaves no Place for Rewards or Punishments either here or hereafter ; and yet this was the avow'd Doctrin of one famous Sect among them. And the Prevalency of this Doctrin of Fate in the Heathen World, together with the pernicious Influence it naturally has upon Virtue and Religion, was the Reaſon why the ancient Fathers of the Chriſtian Church took ſo much Pains

Pains in their several Writings to confute and expose it.

Nor did they only hold *Principles* destructive of Virtue, but also maintain'd *Practices* of a very vile and corrupt Nature. *Plato* taught the Expedience and Lawfulness of * *Exposing Children* in particular Cases, and *Aristotle* also of *Abortion*; At *Athens*, the great Seat and Nursery of Philosophers, it was laid down for a Rule, * That Infants which appear'd to be maim'd, should either be kill'd or expos'd; and, † That the *Athenians* might lawfully invade and enslave any People, who in their Opinion were fit to be made Slaves. * Many of the Philosophers maintain'd the Lawfulness of Self-Murder. † Not only the *Epicureans* and others, but even *Plato* himself allow'd Fornication, and which is more shocking, a Community of Wives; and the most famous among them were known not only to approve but practice * unnatural Lust. To which we may add the *Cynicks*, who laying aside the natural Restraints of Shame and Modesty, committed the Acts of Lust like brute Beasts, *openly*, and *in the Sight of the Sun*; and the *Stoicks*, who held that no Words or Speech of any kind ought to be avoided or censur'd, as *filthy* and *obscene*.

These are Principles and Doctrins, by which many of the Philosophers, and those of greatest Note, let Men loose from the Obligations of Duty, and gave them full Liberty to indulge their brutal Appetites, and degrade human Nature into that of Beasts, while they were filling their Heads with fine Notions and exalted Speculations. And as these Indulgences so agreeable to the Corruptions of Nature, plainly account for that Zeal which is shown

Plat. de Rep. l. 5.
* Casting out to perish.
† Arist. Po. l. 7. c. 16.
Ibid. l. 7. c. 17.
† Ibid. l. 2. c. 14.
* Arist. Pol. l. 7. c. 16.
Cic. Fin. l. 1.
Sen. Ep. 12, 28, 58, 70.
† Cic. pro Calio.
Plat. Conviv.
de Leg. l. 8.
Athen. l. 13.
* Athen. l. 13.
Lucian. de Amore.
Plutarch. de Lib. Educ.
Cic. Tusc. q. l. 4.
† Cic. Ep. l. 9.

for Reason and Philosophy as our best Guides in Religion ; so the great Objection against the Gospel Revelation is, that it expressly forbids Uncleanneſs of all kinds, whether in Thought or Deed, as that which above all other things poisons and corrupts the Soul, and makes it utterly unfit for the ſpiritual Joys and Delights of the next World ; for which the pure Precepts of the Gospel, and the daily Practice of them, are deſigned to prepare us.

5. In Fact, the Influence which the ancient Philoſophers had in reforming Mankind, was inconfiderable. *Idolatry* was univerſally practiſed throughout the Heathen World, and the Worſhip of their Gods conſiſted of the moſt filthy, abſurd, and abominable Rites : Strumpets running up and down the Streets naked, with obſcene Speeches and wanton Geſtures : Men inflaming themſelves with Wine, and after that in the Dark ſatiſfying their Luſt promiſcuouſly among a Number of Women : Temples erected to a Goddeſs as the Patroness of Luſt, and ſhe miniſtered unto by lewd Women, who prostituted themſelves before her, and dedicated their Gain to her ; with other Inſtances of Obſcenity, too groſs to be mention'd, and yet avowedly made a Part of their Religious Rites. And it is not to be wonder'd, that *Uncleanneſs* of almoſt every Kind was freely and openly practis'd among them, when their Worſhip conſiſted of it, and their Philoſophers taught it both by their Doctrine and their Practice. The Oblation of *Human Sacrifices* to their Gods was frequently practis'd ; nor was their own Offspring ſpared upon ſome Occaſions. Nothing could be more cruel and barbarous, than to take Pleaſure in ſeeing Men murder and deſtroy

Floralia.

Bacchanalia.

Venus.

See before,
P. 27.

one

one another, which yet was avowedly practis'd in their publick Shews, and Persons were *train'd up* to that inhuman Exercise, and permitted to hire themselves out to the Work; and it is affirm'd by one who wrote an entire Discourse upon the Subject, that even War itself did not occasion so great a Destruction of Mens Lives, as those Shews which they instituted for publick Diversion. Nor, in private Life, can we reasonably hope or expect to find among them the great Virtues of Love, Meekness and Forgiveness, when we find *Socrates* Plato, Phil. declaring it neither unjust nor revengeful, to rejoice in the Calamities of our Enemies; and *Cicero* expressly approving and professing *Revenge*; and *Aristotle* speaking of Meekness, not only as a Defect of the Mind, and as carrying in it too great a Disposition to forgive, but calling the patient enduring of Reproach, the Spirit of a *Slave*. Lipfii Saturn. l. 1. c. 12.

When our Saviour came into the World, and for some time before, human Knowledge of all kinds, and particularly the Study of Philosophy, was cultivated and improv'd in the *Roman* Empire, with the greatest Application, and by the Ablest Hands. But how little Effect either theirs or the Writings of the *Greek* Philosophers had upon the Generality of Mankind, may be learnt from St. *Paul's* Account of the State of the Heathen World, and the Cautions he gives the Christian Converts against their wicked and abominable Practices. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord*, Ephes. 4.
that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles 17. 18. 19.
walk, in the Vanities of their Mind; Having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that

- is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts ; Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto Lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with Greediness. And again,*
- Ephes. 5. *Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works*
 11, 12. *of Darkness, but rather reprove them ; For it is a Shame even to speak of those Things which are done of them in secret, i. e. in the Celebration*
- See p. 28. *of several of their Rites and Mysteries, which was accompanied with all manner of Lewdness.*
- Col. 3. 5, *And in his Epistle to the Colossians, Mortify*
 6, 7. *therefore your Members which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness which is Idolatry ; for which things sake the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience ; in the which ye also walked some time when ye liv'd in them. Agreeably to this, St. John*
- 1 John, 1. *tells us, that except the Professors of Christi-*
 5. *anity, the whole World lay in Wickedness ; and*
- Rom. 1. *St. Paul, speaking of the Gentile World in ge-*
 26, 27, 29, *neral as living under the Law of Nature, and*
 30, 31. *having mention'd unnatural Lust, as common among them, goes on and tells us, That they were fill'd with Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness ; full of Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Whisperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, Despiteful, Proud, Boasters, Inventers of evil Things, disobedient to Parents, without Understanding, Covenant-breakers, without natural Affection, implacable, unmerciful. St. Peter also exhorting the Gentiles who had been converted to Christianity, to live as became their new Profession, tells them, that the Time past of their Life may suffice them to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, in which they walked in Lasciviousness, Lusts, Excess*

Excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquettings, and abominable Idolatries.

And, in Truth, between the Corruptions of human Nature, and the Inability of the Philosophers to reform them, we are not to wonder that the Heathen World had grown by degrees to such a Pitch of Wickedness. 'The Philosophers in the several Ages were but *few* ; ' The Numbers who repair'd to them for Instruction, were small in Comparison, and their Instructions confin'd to their own Scholars, who were usually Persons only of Fortune and Distinction ; ' The generality of the People had no Opportunity to be instructed by them, nor if they had, were they able to understand and enter into the many dark and abstruse Notions of their Instructors ; ' The publick Rites of Worship, which the People did attend, consisted wholly of the Ceremonies perform'd by their Priests, without any moral Instructions or Lessons of Duty ; ' Tho' the Philosophers had been more clear, few of them had *Schemes* of Religion and Duty, or any more than scatter'd Notions of Morality, added to some private and singular Tenets to distinguish them from other Sects : ' Tho' they had given Schemes entire and uniform, they had not sufficient Authority either to command Attention, or require Obedience ; ' Or whatever Authority any one had, it was greatly diminish'd by the endless Disputes among the Philosophers themselves ; ' And tho' they had been qualified to Teach in all other Respects, little Fruit was to be expected from *Teaching*, where it was not accompanied with good *Living*. Which last Defect is noted by *Tully*, in this remarkable

Pas-

Cic. Tusc. Passage ; ' Scarce any of the Philosophers, says
 qu l. 2. ' he, are form'd in Mind and Manners, accord-
 ' ing to the Dictates of Reason : Scarce any,
 ' who do not make their Institutions rather an
 ' Ostentation of Knowledge, than a Rule of
 ' Life ; Scarce any, who obey themselves, and
 ' are govern'd by their own Precepts.' And so,
 Arist. Eth. long before, represented the Scholars
 l. 2. c. 3. of the Philosophers, ' as learning to *wrangle*,
 ' rather than to *live*, and being no more bet-
 ' ter'd by the moral Lessons of their Masters,
 ' than Sick-Men would be by the Discourses
 ' of their Physician without taking his Pre-
 ' scriptions.' To the same Purpose, *Quinti-*
 Quintil. *lian* speaks of the Philosophers of his own
 Inst. l. 1. Time, ' That the most notorious Vices were
 Præf. ' skreen'd under that Name ; and that they
 ' did not labour to maintain the Character of
 ' Philosophers by Virtue and Study, but con-
 ' ceal'd very vicious Lives under an austere
 ' Look and a different Habit from the rest of
 ' the World.

But there is yet another Way of judging
 what the State of Religion in any Country is
 like to be, where Natural Reason is their only
 Guide ; and that is, from the Notions and
 Practices that have been found among People
 who were unknown to the Ancients, by the
 later Discoverers of Countries, and by others
 who have travelled into those Countries. A
 Collection of that sort has been lately made out
 of Books of Travels and other authentick Ac-
 counts, by a faithful and judicious Hand ; and
 to let you see more clearly and at one View how
 absurd and abominable they were, I have here
 reduc'd them to their several Heads, of *Worship*,
Doctrin, and *Practice*.

Millar,
 Propaga-
 tion of
 Christiani-
 ty, c. 7.

As

As to their **WORSHIP**; it may be truly said in general, that *Idolatry* has been found in almost every Country that has been discover'd, and, in many of them Rites of Worship very wicked and abominable. In ¹ some, they were performed by *Women*, who in performing them laid aside all natural Shame and Modesty; and in ² others, Women prostituted themselves for the Maintenance of their Idol, and in Honour of it. In ³ some Places, the People cut off Pieces of their own Flesh and threw them to their Idol, and in ⁴ many others they were found to offer *human* Sacrifices, and vast Numbers of them at a Time. The Objects of their Worship were the ⁵ Sun, Moon and Stars, ⁶ the four Elements, the ⁷ several Quarters of the Earth, ⁸ Apes, ⁹ Elephants, ¹⁰ Serpents, Vipers, Dragons, Tygers, Herbs, Trees, ¹¹ Birds, Fishes, Mountains; and in many Places ¹² Evil Spirits. And, together with their Idolatrous Worship, ¹³ Sorcery, Divination, and Magick, were found to be common among them.

1. Formosa, and the Philippine Islands. 2. Bisdagar and Nasinga in the East-Indies. — Camdu, in Tartary. 3. Bisdagar, and Nasinga. 4. Ceylon, Mexico, Peru, Terra Firma, Virginia. 5. Tartary, Philippine Islands, Guinea: Ausico and Jagos and Monomotapa, (all in Africa,) Zocotara, an Island near Africa; Chili, Peru, Terra Firma, Canada, Florida; Hispaniola, Virginia. 6 Ceylon. 7. Tonquin, in the East-Indies. 8. Goa. 9: Ceylon. 10. Congo and Angola, in Africa. 11: Guinea. 12. Ceylon, Java, Philippine Islands, Aethiopia, Virginia. 13. Tartary, China, Terra Firma, Brasil, Canada, Granada; Hispaniola, Florida, Virginia, New-England.

E

Among

Among their DOCTRINS, and Heads of Belief, were found these that follow. 1. Two Gods, one of Heaven, the other of Earth; 2. Two Sorts of Gods, Dæmons to be fear'd, and Conquerors and Benefactors to be honour'd; 3. Several Gods presiding over several Quarters of the Earth; 4. One God above the Rest, becoming so, by first passing thro' a Multitude of Bodies; 5. Gods subject to various Changes, and limited to certain Times of Government; 6. Providence concerning itself only about the great Affairs of the World; 7. The Transmigration of human Souls into the Bodies of Beasts; 8. Pagods eating and drinking like Men; 9. The Souls of Men, after Death, needing Meat and Drink, and other Accommodations of this Life.

Many PRACTICES have been found among them, that are abominable; 1. Women burning themselves with their Husbands, when dead; 2. The chief Servants of a Prince kill'd at his Death, to attend him in another World; 3. Eating Men's Flesh, and Shambles for selling it; 4. Sucking up the Blood of wounded

1. Tartary. 2. Japan. 3. Formosa. 4. Siam. 5. Malabar. 6. Malabar, Ceylon, Japan, Florida. 7. Indians, Tartars, Florida. 8. The Bramins. 9. Tartary, Guinea, Terrafirma, Canada.

1. East-Indies, Guinea. 2. Guinea, Terrafirma. 3. Jagos (in Africa) Brazil, Hispaniola. 4. Tartary.

and dying Persons ; 5. Feasting upon the Bodies of their Captives ; 6. Having a Number of Wives and Concubines, and putting away Wives at Pleasure ; 7. Exposing and Killing their Children, if born under an unhappy Planet, or 8. born before the Mother was of such an Age, or 9. if the Parents found themselves over-charged. *

* More Instances of

the like

Kind may

be seen in

Mr. Lock's

Essay, l. 1.

c. 3. S. 9.

These and the like Instances of Corruption in Worship, Doctrin, and Practice, which have prevail'd, and do still prevail, in several Parts of the Heathen World, may further show the Insufficiency of *Natural Reason* to be a Guide in Religion, and into what monstrous Opinions and Practices whole Nations may be led, where that is their Guide, without any Help from Revelation. Nor will it take off the Force of this Argument, to say, that these were owing to an *undue Use* of their Reason, which is in Effect to beg the Question ; or that the Measure of Reason they had was low and imperfect, since they appear'd to be skilful and dextrous enough in worldly Matters, in the Arts of annoying their Neighbours, and defending themselves against Incursions, in entering into Leagues for their mutual Defence, and conducting the ordinary Affairs of Life according to the Manners and Customs of their several Countries. Nor are the Absurdities in Religion that have been found among *them*, greater than

See be-

fore, pag.

28.

5. Canada. 6. Almost every where in Pagan Countries.
7. Ceylon. 8. Formosa. 9. China.

those that have been found among the most polite Nations before the Publication of the Gospel ; which are a joint Proof, that no Age or Country, be it rude or civiliz'd, instructed or uninstructed in Arts and Sciences, infected or uninfected with Plenty and Luxury, is secur'd by mere natural Reason against falling into the grossest Errors and Corruptions in Religion.

Hitherto, you have seen the pernicious Errors and wicked Practices into which the World has fal'n both in ancient and later Days, notwithstanding the Light of Natural Reason, and the Lessons of Philosophers. But as the Christian Institution in its *Nature* and *Tendency* is far better calculated for the Reformation of Mankind, than any Teaching or Discipline the World had in the Days of Heathenism ; so in Fact it has had a far greater Effect in the Advancement of true Religion, and the Reformation of the Lives and Manners of Men. Not to insist upon the exalted Degrees of Purity and Perfection to which Christianity rais'd so many of its first Professors, ' their Contempt of the World, ' their wonderful Courage and Patience under Persecution, ' their Mortifications and Self-Denials, ' their fervent Love and Charity and Deyotion, ' not, I say, to insist upon these, tho' the true and genuin Effects of Christianity, because it may be said, they were Effects of an *extraordinary* kind, and wrought only upon *particular* Persons ; let us take a View of it, not as it was embrac'd by single Persons or Families, but as it became the receiv'd Religion of whole Countries, and see what Effects it had among them. And it is universally

true.

true, that wherever Christianity prevail'd, Ora-
 cles ceas'd, Idols were destroy'd, and
 the Worship of the true God established.
 And whereas the Heathen Worship, as
 we have seen, consisted of the Sacrifices of
 Beasts and Men, and was accompanied with
 many foolish, cruel, and impure Rites, Christi-
 anity banish'd all these, and, wherever it was
 receiv'd, did establish a Worship suitable to
 the pure and spiritual Nature of God, a Wor-
 ship of the Heart, consisting of Prayers, and
 Praises and Thanksgivings, to him who is the
 Author of our Being, and under whose daily
 Protection we live, and who bestows upon us
 all the good Things we enjoy. And there is
 no Christian Country, wherein this reasonable
 Service is not solemnly performed by Ministers,
 and attended by the People; to which, and to
 the Instructions and Exhortations of Christian
 Preachers, it is to be ascrib'd, that the Know-
 ledge of the true God, and the Duty we owe
 him, is preserv'd to such a Degree upon the
 Minds of the Generality of the People, and that
 several Vices which were not only practis'd but
 publickly allow'd in the Times of Heathenism,
 are scarce known, and never nam'd without
 Abhorrence, in Christian Countries. Nor can
 it be said, with any Colour of Reason or
 Truth, that the general Order, Regularity,
 and Sense of Duty, which is found in Christian
 Countries at this Day, compar'd with the
 Cruelties, Disorders, and Excesses of all kinds,
 that are generally practis'd in Heathen Na-
 tions, is not owing to the Christian Institution
 and Worship, and to the Certainty of future Re-

Rewards and Punishments that Christ brought to Light ; the Sense of which is preserv'd upon the Minds of the People by such publick Teaching. And though so great is the Corruption of human Nature, that notwithstanding those Means of Instruction and those Restraints from Wickedness, many Disorders and Excesses are practis'd in Christian Countries; it is sufficient to our present Purpose, ' That if those Means and Restraints were remov'd, the Excesses would evidently be far greater and more general than they are ; ' That the Commission of them among Christians, is by far less frequent, and is attended with much more Caution and Shame than among Heathens ; ' That besides those *general* Influences of Christianity, such Excesses are in some Measure balanced by the extraordinary Degrees of Piety, Purity, and Exactness of Life and Manners, which are observ'd by Multitudes of People in every Christian Country ; ' That the Design of the Christian Institution was not to *force* Men to be good, but only to propose fit Motives and proper Encouragements and Assistances to make them so ; and our Saviour himself supposes that in his Kingdom here upon Earth there will always be Tares growing up with the Wheat (a *Mixture* of good and bad) till he himself shall make the *final* Separation. Tho' his Kingdom is not of this World, it is *in* it ; and it is a very unfair Inference, that because Wickedness is found in Christian Countries, therefore Christianity has fail'd of its End.

III. *A Divine Revelation was not only Expedient, but highly Needful, to be a sure Guide*

in Matters of Religion. This follows from the particulars which have been treated of under the last Head, in Relation to the ancient Philosophers. For it is agreed on all Hands, that the most successful Efforts of mere *Natural Reason*, towards the Discovery of divine Truths and the Duties to be perform'd by us, with our Obligations to perform them, were made by the Philosophers. And, ' If they, after all their Searches, could never tell in what manner God was to be worship'd nor by what Means Sinners might be reconcil'd to him, and recover his favour; ' If they could never come to a *certain* Knowledge concerning the Immortality of the Soul and future Rewards and Punishments, which are the principal Motives to the Performance of our Duty, and the only Motives than can make it regarded by the Generality of Mankind; ' If the Differences among the Philosophers concerning Points of the greatest Importance in Religion, were so many, and so eagerly pursu'd by the several Sects, that instead of informing Mankind in their Duty, they perplex'd and distracted them, and at last left them under greater Uncertainties than they were before, while no one had more Authority than another to prescribe a fix'd Scheme of Duty; ' If many of the Philosophers mix'd Precepts of Vice with their Precepts of Virtue; and, ' If in Fact, under their Direction and Disciplin, the Heathen World and the Generality of Mankind in their several Ages, remain'd in a State of gross Idolatry, Uncleannefs,

clearness, Impiety, and Immorality of all Kinds ; It follows, that either Mankind must remain Irrecoverably in a State of Ignorance and Corruption, or that there must be some divine Revelation, to help them out of it.

And, in Truth, it is very absurd to suppose, That either Philosophy, or any Thing but a divine Revelation could do it. The Philosophers plainly saw a great Degree of Darkness and Degeneracy in the Mind of Man ; their Sense of which is well express'd by *Tully*, ' If, says he, Nature had so fram'd

Cic. Tusc.
qu. l. 3.
Præf.

' us, as to give us a full and perfect View of her, and an Ability to follow her as our Guide, then Mankind would have needed no other Teacher : But now, the Light she has given us is no more than little Sparks, which we quickly extinguish by corrupt Lives and perverse Opinions so that the true Light of Nature is nowhere to be found'. And then he goes on, and says, ' There are in our Minds the Seeds of Virtue, by which Nature would conduct us to Happiness, if they were allow'd to grow up. But now, no sooner are we born, but we fall into a wretched Depravity and Corruption of Manners and Opinions'. But though the Philosophers clearly saw this Corruption and Depravity, how could they find a Cure for it, when they knew not the Cause of it ? The Recovery of Mankind depended wholly upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and the Method of it was not to be known but by Revelation from him. The Means whereby it was

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be wrought, was a Supernatural Assistance; which being his own free Gift, could not be made known and ensur'd by any other Hand. And therefore we find two of the greatest Philosophers, *Socrates* and *Plato*, despairing of the Recovery of Mankind out of a state of Error and Corruption, without some extraordinary Assistance from God. *Socrates* speaking to the *Athenians* of himself, tells them, " That when he is gone, they will fall into an irrecoverable State, unless God shall take care of them, and send them another Instructor. "

Plato A- 1
pol. So-
cratis.

And *Plato*, speaking of the wrong Methods of Education among the *Athenians*, says, " That in such a state of things, whatever is kept right and as it ought to be, must be effected by a *divine* Interposition. " And elsewhere, he introduces one of the Scholars of *Socrates*, complaining how difficult it is to discover the Truth by human Reason, but yet acknowledging it to be every one's Duty to employ it, and to rely upon it, " Unless one could find some more sure and safe Pilot, such as a *divine* Direction would be. "

De Re-
publ. l. 6.

Plato in
Paed.

But we will suppose, what is far from being so, that one or other of the Philosophers had in their several Writings discover'd the *Whole* of Religion; this would not by any means have render'd a Divine Revelation Needless, because whatever human Reason pretends to discover, must be judg'd by human Reason whether it be true or false, and it was not likely the *generality* of People should be able to make such a judgment, since there was scarce any one Point in which the Philosophers themselves did not oppose and contradict one another, while no one pretended to have any

higher Guide than his own Reason, nor by consequence any right to advance and establish his own Notions in opposition to all the rest. So that, in this case, it is manifest there would still have been wanting a Superior Authority to give a Sanction to some one Scheme; which could only be given, either immediately by God, or by some Person who gave evident Testimonies of his coming from God; and none of the Philosophers pretending to this, Mankind were left to be toss'd about by contrary Waves, without either Pilot, or Star, or Compass, to bring them to their Harbour. Some of the Philosophers had indeed an implicit Submission paid to their Dictates, but that was only from their own Scholars, who thought themselves bound to maintain the Doctrines of their Sect as such, tho' without any Pretence of divine Authority in the Founder. But the case was otherwise with our Saviour: He is said by the Evangelists to teach with *Authority*, and to teach with *Power*; and he had a Right so to do, because he prov'd by his Miracles that he had a Commission from God, and by that was fully empower'd to declare the Will of God, and to deliver to Mankind a fixt, certain, and indispensable Rule of Duty.

IV. *Mankind are oblig'd to Enquire, whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of its coming from God.* If they believe they are the Creatures of God, they must think themselves bound to pay Adoration to him as their Creator, and cannot but be concern'd to know in what manner he will be worship'd, and what is the Duty and Homage that he requires at their Hands. If they believe that they are *dependent* Creatures, and
need

Mat. vii.
29.
Luk. v.
32.

need the Favour and Protection of God, they cannot but desire to know in what way they may most please him, and what are the surest Means of obtaining his Favour: If they believe, that God governs the World, and that they live under his Providence, they cannot but desire the best Light that is to be had, from his own Declarations and the Examples of former Times into the Rules of his Providence, and the ordinary Methods of his Dealings with Mankind: If they believe a State of future Rewards and Punishments, according to their Behaviour in this Life, they cannot but desire to know, with the utmost certainty and assurance, what the Behaviour is which will secure the one, and avoid the other: and of all these things there can be no knowledge or assurance, equal to that which God himself gives. So that, while Men, out of a Zeal for what they call Natural Religion, are *unconcern'd* whether God has made any Revelation of his Will or not, they violate the Laws of Nature in a double-respect; First, by resisting that natural *Impression* which has always carried Men to *Enquire* after the Declarations of God's Will; and then, by an obstinate unconcernedness for their own Safety and Welfare, contrary to the great and fundamental Law of Nature, Self-Preservation.

No one who believes there is a God, and that he is a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, can doubt whether he *can* make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, which may be fully attested to come from him, by Miracles, and Predictions of future Events, and the like undeniable Testimonies of a divine Mission. To affirm this, would not only be in

effect to deny a God, but to contradict the universal Belief that we find in all Ages and Nations, of divine Communications with Men; which shews at least the general Sense of Mankind, as to the possibility of the thing. And certainly, considering the false and very corrupt Notions the World was fal'n into, concerning God, and his Worship, and the other Duties we owe him, notwithstanding the *Examples* of some good Men in the successive Ages, who retained upon their Minds a Sense of Religion, and their *Endeavours* to convince Mankind of the natural Connection there is between Virtue and Happiness, Vice and Misery; in such Circumstances, it was very agreeable to the natural Notions we have of the divine Goodness and Wisdom, to suppose that He would make a farther Revelation to Mankind, which might give them a clearer Knowledge, and a stronger Sense, of Duty; unless we will suppose that he had utterly abandon'd them.

They who think it had been most agreeable to the divine Wisdom and Goodness, to have given Mankind one certain Rule from the beginning, which should have been a sufficient Guide to all future Generations, and that the *Need* of a new Revelation implies a want of Knowledge and Foresight in God; seem to forget, that Man was created a *Free Agent*, and as such *must* have it in his *Power* to fall into a state of Degeneracy and Corruption. And when the generality of Mankind were actually fal'n into that State, the acquainting them by a special Revelation how they might be deliver'd out of it (how their Natures might be rectified, and themselves restor'd to the Favour of God,) could not

surely

surely be any Derogation to the Characters of Wisdom and Goodness. As well may we charge a Physician with want of Skill, for not treating the Sound and the Sick by one and the same Rule, and while he is finding out Remedies, and prescribing Regulations, to restore a Constitution well nigh ruin'd by Debauchery and Excess, accuse him for *suffering* the Patient, who was in a State of *Liberty* and *Freedom*, to run into those pernicious Courses: As well may a Prince, who proclaims Conditions of Pardon and Favour to his rebellious Subjects, be charg'd with want of Goodness; because he did not chain them up from their Cradles, and lay them under an utter *Inability* to rebel.

I cannot forbear in this place to take notice of the extreme Vanity and Presumption of those, who think themselves at liberty to *disregard* the Gospel-Revelation, till God shall think fit to satisfy them, for what reason He did not make it *sooner*, and why not to all Mankind *at once*. As if He were accountable to us for His Proceedings and Dispen-sations, and we at liberty to refuse the Benefits or Deliverances He sends, because they come not at the time or in the manner that we judge most proper. Such Persons may as well ask, Why he made us Men and not Angels? Why he did not bring us into the World with the perfect use of our Reason? Why he did not give to all Men the same Capacity and Leasure to know and learn their Duty? Why he has appointed *different degrees* of Happiness in the next Life? — If indeed it appear'd, that God would judge Men for the Transgression of any Duty which they did not and could not know to be their Duty, and that he would make them *accountable* for not being influenc'd by Motives which he had

never

never acquainted them with; it would be difficult to reconcile such a Proceeding to the divine Justice. But since the contrary to this is true, and it is certain God will not punish Men for invincible Ignorance; surely He is at liberty to dispense *Extraordinary Favours* at what Times, and in what Measures, to what Nations and to what Persons, he thinks fit; and there can be no doubt, but such Persons and Nations are bound to receive them with all the Gratitude and Thankfulness that is due from Creatures to their Creator. Are we then to quarrel with God, that He raises us to greater Degrees of Perfection, in order to advance us to greater Degrees of Happiness and Glory? Can there be a more flagrant Instance of Perverseness, than to *refuse* his Favours, for the very reason which ought to increase our Thankfulness for them, namely, that he vouchsafes them to *Us*, and not to *Others*? As to the Heathens, tho' the Light of Reason is but dim, yet they who have no better Light to walk by, and who honestly make use of that, as the only Guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite Justice and Goodness. This is the foundation of St. Paul's reasoning upon the State of the Gentile World, That God did *not* then *leave himself* without witnesses: the regular returns of the *Seasons* of the Year, and the former and latter Rain coming at their sett times and blessing them with plentiful Harvests, were visible Evidences of his Providence and Goodness. And tho', notwithstanding these Evidences, they fell into Idolatry, yet because those were *times of Ignorance*, in which they had no other Guide but the Light of Nature, God *winked at them*, or bore with them, and did not let loose his Vengeance, utterly to destroy them.

Acts xiv.
16, 17.
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with xvii.
30, 31.

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But now (upon the publication of the Gospel, as St. Paul goes on) *he commandeth all men every where to repent; Because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* And they who have received this express Command from God, and do not regard it, or, in other Words, they who enjoy the clear Light of the Gospel, and perversely reject it; instead of being entitl'd to Mercy, have their Guilt greatly aggravated, ' by shutting their Eyes against the Light he has given, ' by defeating the Measures he has ordain'd for their Salvation; ' by rejecting a Dispensation on no other account, but because it is too pure and perfect, and ' by refusing the Happiness that God offers, for no other reason, but because they will not come up to the Terms and Conditions upon which he offers it.

No less unreasonable are they, who plead that if a Revelation is to be regarded, it ought to be made to every *Person*, or at least to every *Age*. For a *Rule of Duty* is one and the same, to all Persons and in all Ages; and when a standing Test is once given to distinguish Truth from Error, it is equally a Test at all Times, and in all Places; supposing it to be convey'd to them with sufficient Evidence of its coming from God. That this is the case of the Gospel-Revelation, I have shewn you at large in my first Letter; and after God has given such Evidence as is abundantly sufficient to satisfy an ingenious and unprejudic'd Mind, it is very unreasonable to suppose that He is oblig'd to make every Age and every Country a Scene of new Miracles, only to satisfy the Disingenuity and Obstinacy of those, who have already re-

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receiv'd sufficient Evidence, and yet will not be convinced. This is the foundation of what our Saviour says in the Parable of the Rich Man, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded tho' one rose from the dead.* The Spirit of Infidelity is proof against all Arguments and Conviction; and the Jews are a lasting Testimony, how little it avails to be *Eye-witnesses* to Miracles, when Men have once resolv'd to be Infidels.

Since then a Revelation from God is not only possible, but also probable, and very agreeable to the divine Wisdom and Goodness; and we live in a Country which avowedly acknowledges and embraces the *Gospel-Revelation*; and it is certain, in fact, that the same has been acknowledged and embrac'd by many other Countries for above Sixteen Hundred Years, and still continues to be so, as the great Foundation of Men's Happiness both temporal, and eternal; to say in this Case, that they are not obliged, according to their several Abilities and Opportunities, to enquire whether such a Revelation has been really made, and what grounds there are to believe that it came from God, is to say, that they are at liberty to renounce all the Rules of Reason and Prudence, as well as all Concern for the Safety and Welfare of Body and Soul.

V. *It is the Duty of Mankind to Receive for their Guide whatever Revelation comes from God; and also to receive it whole and entire.* What the Evidences are of the Gospel-Revelation's coming from God, I have shewn at large in my former Letter; and I am so far from desiring Men to rest implicitly upon the Belief of any Age or Country, that the Design of the last head is to convince them of the Obligation they are under, to make a strict Enquiry into

into those Evidences, and to see whether they be such as are fit for a reasonable and impartial Mind to acquiesce in. And if upon Examination, the Evidences of the Fact appear to be full and strong, and nothing be found in the Matter reveal'd, that is a *manifest* Contradiction in itself, or *evidently* inconsistent either with the divine Perfections, or with our natural Notions of Good and Evil; then I must add, that we are *bound* to receive it as a Rule of Faith and Practice, notwithstanding any colourable Suggestions to the contrary; because we are satisfied that it comes from God, who has a Right to give us a Rule, and who can give no Rule but what is true, and just, and good. So argues an accurate Reasoner, upon this Head: 'Since God, in giving us the Light of Reason, has not thereby tied up his own hands from affording us, when he thinks fit, the Light of *Revelation*, in any of those Matters wherein our Natural Faculties are able to give a *probable* Determination; Revelation, where God has been pleas'd to give it, must carry it against the *probable* Conjectures of Reason. Because the Mind not being *certain* of the Truth of that it does not *evidently* know, but only yielding to the *probability* that appears in it, is bound to *give up* its Assent to such a Testimony, which, it is satisfied, comes from one who cannot err, and will not deceive.' For the same reason, we are not at liberty to admit some part of a Divine Revelation and reject the rest; we may not, for Instance, receive the Improvements it makes in the moral Law, and, stopping there, reject or disregard the Methods it provides for the Redemption of Mankind, nor the Ordinances and Institutions it lays down for the Peace and Edification of the Church

Lock;
Vol. 1.
P. 328.

and every particular Member of it, nor, in general, any thing that it requires either to be believ'd or practis'd: Because, if the whole appear to come from God, every part has equally the Stamp of divine Authority; and he who rejects any part, may for the same reason reject the whole.

And while I am shewing you the Obligation you are under to *receive* the Gospel Revelation, it will be necessary that I caution you against *Scepticism*, or an unreasonable *Difficulty* in believing, and suspending the Assent of the Mind after it has receiv'd the proper grounds of Conviction. Such Scepticks are all they; who will not be content with those sorts of proof which things are capable of; for Instance, will not believe things which were done before their own Time, because they did not see or hear them, or because they are not prov'd to them by Mathematical Demonstration, of which all historical Facts whatsoever are in their nature equally incapable. Such also are they, who are so *partial* in giving their Assent, as to believe the Histories of *Julius* and *Augustus Caesar* without the least Scruple, but are full of Doubts about the History of *Jesus Christ*, tho' supported by Evidences far more clear and numerous. To these may well be applied, what was said by an excellent Writer, in relation to this Sceptical Humour: " Those who will pretend
 " such kind of Grounds for their disbelief of
 " any thing, will never be able to persuade
 " others, that the true cause why they do not
 " give their Assent, is not because they have
 " no *Reason* for it, but because they have no
 " *Mind* to it. " We are naturally very uneasy under a state of *Suspence* about any thing we like and care in earnest to pursue; and

Dr. Willk.
 Nat. Rel.
 p. 26.

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Men's willingness to continue in suspense as to the truth of the Gospel Revelation, is a certain sign that it is a Business they do not like, nor care for. And altho' this is not downright Infidelity, yet it makes Men indifferent about Religion, and unactive in their Christian Course, and takes off the *force* and *influence* of future Rewards and Punishments, almost as much as Infidelity itself.

VI. *Such and so many, are the Excellencies of the Gospel Revelation, that every wise and good Man must WISH it to be true; whether we consider the Ends it proposes, or the Means for attaining those Ends.*

The great Ends it proposes, are, 'The Perfection of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind, 'To remove us from the state of Brutes, and advance us to the perfection of Angels, and, upon the whole, 'To lay a sure foundation for our Peace and Happiness, both Temporal and Eternal.

The means it uses for attaining those great Ends are of several sorts. For Instance; Fierceness and Cruelty, and an unrestrain'd enjoyment of sensual Pleasures, being the distinguishing Characters of the Brutal Nature; the Gospel Revelation abounds with Prohibitions of Anger, Malice, Hatred, Revenge, and the like brutal Qualities; and also lays the strongest Restraints upon sensual Pleasures and Delights, and strictly forbids the enjoyment of them beyond the bounds it has set. And this, not only in the outward Acts, but also in the inward Thoughts, Imaginations, and Desires; which corrupt the Soul, and keep it in a *disposition* to Acts of Cruelty and Uncleaness, and in a readiness to proceed to the exercise of them, whenever Provocations or Enticements come in the way.

See the
first Letter,
p. 11.

And these prohibitions duly attended to in the inward Desires as well as outward Acts, at the same time that they set us above the Condition of Brutes, do also lay a Foundation for the Peace und Happiness of our Lives; which Experience, as well as the universal Consent of the wisest Men in all Ages, proves to be interrupted and destroy'd by nothing so much, as the indulging unruly Lusts and Passions. And whereas, next to these, the Happiness of this Life is greatly impair'd by Sicknefs, Want, Oppression, and many other temporal Calamities; Christianity provides for our Comfort under all these, not upon the Principles of the ancient Philosophers, "Because they are common to Mankind, and we cannot avoid them, and Death will put an end to them;" but by assuring us, that they come from the Hand of a wise and good God, who can and will either deliver us from them or support us under them, and that they are design'd by him to wean us from the Delights of this World, and to prepare us for the Enjoyment of a much better. Of the like Tendency, are the many Precepts of the Gospel, which command us not to set our Hearts upon the Things of this World, but to pursue them with Moderation and Indifference, and a constant Resignation to the Will of God; as these do not only prevent all the Vexation that otherwise attends the loss of them and our Disappointments about them, but also disengage the Heart from them, and give it greater Liberty, as well as a readier Disposition, to attend and pursue the Affairs of the next Life.

For tho' it is certain, that the Precepts of Christianity greatly tend to our Comfort and Happiness

See before, p. 11.

Happinefs in this Life, it is as certain, that they are chiefly design'd to prepare us for the Happinefs of another. The Rules of the Philosophers were many of them wisely calculated for the good of human Society and the Members of it in *this* World; but had by no means such a direct tendency and relation to the Spiritual Enjoyments of the *next*, as appears to be the general Aim and Tenor of the Rules of the Gospel. And as the Precepts of Christianity are Preparations for a Happinefs of a very different Nature from that which any *worldly* Enjoyments afford, and have higher Views and nobler Ends that can be answer'd or attain'd by those of meer Morality; in these respects, it was necessary that the Gospel Precepts should be built upon higher Principles than those of Morality; and that they should be of a more pure, refin'd, and exalted Nature, and enforced by higher and more noble Motives.

Accordingly, Christianity first gives us a true Knowledge of the *Nature* of God; that it is not impure as the greatest part of the Heathens believ'd, nor yet severe and Terrible, according to the general Tenor of the Jewish Dispensation, as given to a *stiffneck'd* and *obstinate* People; But that He is a Being of a pure Spiritual Nature, and is kind to us, and loves to do us good, and has given the highest Proof of it in sending his own Son to die for us and redeem us from eternal Death, to the end He might engage our Love and Obedience to Him, and we by that means procure eternal Happinefs to ourselves. And by this Knowledge of his Nature, we are led to see, that he must not be worshipped according to the impure Rites of the Heathen Services, nor yet by the Sacrifices of Beasts, which were only *Types*
cf

Joh. iv.
23.

of our Redemption by Christ; but with a steady Attention of the Soul, and a pure Heart, and sincere Intentions and Resolutions of Obedience; which our Saviour briefly expresses by worshipping God in *Spirit and in Truth*, and which has a natural Tendency to fit us for the divine Exercises of Praise and Contemplation in the next Life, and, in the mean while, is a means of preserving a constant Communication between God and us, during our continuance in this World.

To the same *Spiritual* Ends, tend all the Duties of Life which are either peculiar to the Christian Institution, or at least are carried by it to greater Degrees of Purity and Perfection. Such are, with regard to *ourselves*; Holiness of Heart; a sober use of the Enjoyments of Life, with Mortifications and Self-denials as we find occasion; an Indifference about the Things of this World, compar'd with our Care about the Things of the next; *the seeking those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God*; *the having our Conversation in heaven*, the laying up our Treasure in heaven, and the keeping a strict Watch over our *Thoughts* as well as Actions. With regard to our *Neighbour*, The forgiveness of Injuries, the loving of Enemies, the doing all the good we can to Men for God's Sake, the blessing them that curse us, the praying for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, and the overcoming evil with good. The Precepts which relate to ourselves, prepare us for Heaven, as it is a Place of *pure spiritual* Enjoyments; and those which relate to our Neighbour, prepare us for it, as it is a Place where Love, and Peace, and Unity reign, to the greatest Degree, and in the highest Perfection. And whereas not only the Heathen but also the Jewish

Jewish Worship consisted chiefly in outward Rites and Ordinances; there are no more than two of that sort in our Saviour's Institution, and those very plain and significant; Baptism, by which we are admitted into the Society of Christians, and all the advantages of it; and the Lord's Supper, by which we declare our Continuance in that Society; thankfully commemorating the great Work of our Redemption by Christ, and applying to ourselves the Comforts and Benefits of it; and at the same time, resolving to live as *becomes* His Disciples, and receiving *Spiritual Strength* to support us in that Resolution.

But because, by reason of the Corruption of our Hearts, we are not naturally dispos'd to Spiritual Exercises, and the greatest part of Mankind have their Thoughts employ'd about the Business or the Pleasures of this World, and are daily expos'd to Temptations of one kind or another; all which indispose them for Devotion, and make them ignorant or unmindful of their Duty, and very apt to fall into the Transgression of it; As a fit Remedy for these Evils, the Gospel Institution has appointed a *publick Worship*, which every Christian is bound to attend, and a peculiar Order of Men to explain to the People their Duty, and remind them of it, and to *press* and *enforce* the several Obligations they are under to perform it.

See the
first Letter,
p. 46.

And since the Passions and Appetites of Men lead them strongly to sensual Gratifications and Delights, and the Self-denials which the Gospel requires are so disagreeable to weak and corrupt Nature, that it is in vain to hope that Mankind will be kept to their Duty in either of these Respects by meer Reasoning and Exhortation;

hortation; the Gospel Revelation has provided a balance to our natural Weakness and Corruption, by giving us the *strongest Assurances* of Rewards and Punishments in another World; the one to deter us from gratifying our unruly Passions and inordinate Appetites, and the other to carry us with chearfulness and resolution thro' all the Self-denials which the Gospel requires.

And as the *Love* of God is the highest Principle of Duty and Obedience to him, so the Gospel gives us the strongest and most forcible *Motive* to love him; namely, the sending his own Son into the World to die for us, and by his Death to reconcile us to himself, and make us eternally happy.

And as in all Cases, *Example* has a very powerful Influence, in order to Practice; We have in our Saviour's Life the most perfect Pattern of Goodness, that ever the World beheld; of Meekness and Humility, of Patience and Contentment, of loving to do good to Men, and of an entire Obedience and Submission to the Will of God.

Since also the Christian Institution, which so freely and openly condemns the Wickedness of the World, exposes the sincere Professors of it to Reproach and Persecution; Christ has arm'd and fortified them against these, not only by general Declarations of his acceptance of the Services of those who *Confess him before men*, and are *reproach'd and persecuted for his sake*; but also by special Promises, that he will particularly *Confess them before God and his Angels*, and that *great shall be their Reward in heaven*; which his Apostles express, by *reigning with him*, and by *receiving from his hands a Crown of Life*.

Mat. x. 32. *ly by general Declarations of his acceptance of the Services of those who Confess him before men, and are reproach'd and persecuted for his sake; but also by special Promises, that he will particularly, Confess them before God and his Angels, and that great shall be their Reward in heaven;*

Mat. v. 11, 12. *which his Apostles express, by reigning with him, and by receiving from his hands a Crown of Life.*

2 Tim. ii. 12. *and by receiving from his hands a Crown of Life.*

Jam. i. 12. *And*

And

And because the sense of our natural Corruption and Infirmary might well discourage us from *attempting* to live up to the pure and spiritual Precepts of the Gospel, and to bring our Hearts to a thorow liking of them, and an habitual Obedience to them; therefore the same Gospel ensures a *Supernatural Assistance* to all those who shall desire and pray for it, to support them against Temptation, and preserve in them a constant desire and endeavour to conform their Lives to the Laws of Christ. *If ye, says our Saviour, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* By which Spirit, our Natures are renewed, and our Hearts sanctify'd; and by the same Spirit we are strengthen'd with might in the inner man.

Luke xi.

13.

Rom. xii.

2.

Rom. vi.

13.

Ephes. iii

16.

And, finally, because Men, thro' a consciousness of their manifold Offences against God, would be in perpetual dread of the Divine Justice, and, in a sense of their great Failings and Infirmities, would think themselves unworthy to approach a Being of infinite Purity, and despair of recovering his Favour when they have offended him by the transgression of their Duty; therefore, to comfort sincere Christians, and encourage them to persevere in their Duty, the Son of God who took our Nature upon him, hath satisfy'd the Divine Justice by dying for us, and is appointed the Intercessor between God and Man, and the Mediator of a New Covenant; by which, all who sincerely desire and endeavour to perform their Duty, are not only assur'd of Supernatural Assistance to enable them to discharge it, but also upon a sincere Repentance, and Faith in him, are En-

H

titl'd

titl'd to Pardon and Forgiveness if they transgress it, and assur'd that upon those Terms they shall be restor'd to the Favour of God, and the comfortable Hope of Eternal Life, notwithstanding such Transgressions.

This is the account which the New Testament gives, of the Redemption wrought for us by Christ: ' That his Death was a *Satisfaction* made to the Divine Justice for the Sins of Mankind; ' That thro' Faith in him, we are assur'd of the *Forgiveness* of our Sins upon our Repentance and Amendment; ' That being forgiven, we are *justify'd* in the sight of God; ' That being *justify'd* in his sight, we are *reconcil'd* to him; ' That he who reconciles us to God, *sanctifies* our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform the Will of God, and thereby to *continue* in his favour; ' That for the same end, he *Mediates* and *Intercedes* for us with God, while we continue in this present Life; and, ' That thro' him we have the promise of *Life Eternal*." This is a Scene full of Comfort to all those who comply with the Terms of the Gospel; and, that good Christians may be assured that this is the true Account, and that by Consequence the Hope and Comfort they build upon the Redemption wrought for them by Christ, and their Trust in him, are well founded; I will give them in one View, and in the Words of Scripture, what is plainly deliver'd there, upon each of the foremention'd Heads.

1. Christ, by his Death, made SATISFACTION to the DIVINE JUSTICE for the Sins of Mankind. This the Scripture sets forth by the Expressions, ' Of dying for us, ' Of bearing our Sins, ' Of taking away our Sins, ' Of

‘ Of being a Propitiation for our Sins, ‘ Of Purchasing and Redeeming or Ransoming us with the Price of his Blood.

— By dying FOR us.]— He laid down his ^{1 John iii. 16.} Life for us — He died for our Sins — He ^{1 Cor. xv. 3.} gave himself for us — He was deliver’d for our Offences — He tasted Death for every Man. ^{1 John iii. 16.} Agreeably to the Prophecy concerning him, He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was ^{Rom. iv. 25.} bruised for our Iniquities. ^{Heb. ii. 9.}

— By BEARING our Sins.]— † He was ^{Isa. liii. 5.} once offer’d to bear the Sins of many — He bare ^{† Heb. ix. 26.} our Sins in his own Body on the Tree — Agree- ^{1 Pet. ii. 24.} ably to the Prophecies concerning him, He ^{Isa. liii. 4.} bath born our Grievs and carried our Sorrows — ^{Isa. liii. 6.} The Lord bath laid on him the Iniquity of us all. ^{1 John iii. 5.}

— By TAKING AWAY our Sins.]— He ^{Heb. ix. 26.} was manifested to take away our Sins — He ^{Rev. i. 5.} put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself — He ^{1 John i. 17.} bath wash’d us from our Sins in his own blood — The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from ^{17.} all Sin.

— By being a PROPITIATION for our Sins.]— Him God bath set forth to be a Pro- ^{Rom. iii. 25.} pitiation thro’ Faith in his blood — God sent ^{1 John iv. 10.} his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins — He is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not ^{1 John ii. 2.} for our’s only, but also for the Sins of the whole World.

— By PURCHASING, and REDEEM-
ING or RANSOMING us, with the Price of his Blood.]— He purchas’d the ^{Acts xx. 28.} Church of God with his own blood — He came ^{Mat. xx. 28.} to give his life a Ransom for many — He gave ^{1 Tim. ii. 6.} himself a Ransom for all — We are bought ^{1 Cor. vi. 20.} with a price — In him we have Redemption thro’

H 2

Ephes. i. 7. Col. iii. 4.

Rev. v. 9. *thro' his blood—He hath redeemed us to God by*
 1 Pet. i. *his blood—We are redeem'd with the precious*
 18. *blood of Christ.*

2. The divine Justice being Satisfied, we are assur'd of the **FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS** thro' Christ upon a sincere *Repentance.*

Luke iii. His Fore-runner, *John* the Baptist, preach'd the
 3. *baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins.—*
 Christ tell us, *His Blood was shed for many for the*
Remission of Sins.— After the Resurrection, the

Luk. xxiv. Apostles are directed by Him, *to preach Repen-*
 47. *tance and Remission of Sins in his Name, among all*
Nations.— Accordingly, their Preaching was

Acts v. 31. *this: Him God hath exalted with his right hand*
to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repen-
tance to Israel, and forgiveness of Sins— Repent

Acts ii. *and be baptized every one of you in the name of*
 38. *Jesus Christ, for the remission of Sins—* Thro'

Acts xiii. *this Man is preach'd unto you the forgiveness*
 38. *of Sins—* To him give all the Prophets witness,

Acts x. 43 *that thro' his name whosoever believeth in him*
 2 Cor. v. *shall receive remission of Sins—* God was in Christ

19. *reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing*
 Ephes. i. *their trespasses unto them—* In him we have Redem-

7. *ption thro' his blood, even the forgiveness of Sins—*

Ephes. iv. *And we are commanded to forgive one another,*
 32. *even as God, for Christ's Sake, hath forgiven us.*

3. Our Sins being forgiven, we are **JUS-**
TIFIED by Christ in the Sight of God. By

Acts xiii. *him all that believe are justified—* We are justi-
 39. *fied in the name of the Lord Jesus.—* We are justi-

1 Cor. vi. *fied freely by his Grace, thro' the Redemption*
 11. *that is in Jesus Christ.—* Being justified by his

Rom. iii. *blood, we shall be saved from wrath thro' him—*
 24. *God hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew*

Rom. v. 9. *no sin, that we might be made the Righteous-*
 2 Cor. v. *ness of God in him—* Even the Righteousness

21. *of*

of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto Rom. iii.
all and upon all them that believe. 22.

4. Being justified by Christ, we are RE-
CONCIL'D to God. *Being justified by Faith,* Rom. v. 2.
we have Peace with God, thro' our Lord Jesus
Christ. — We are reconcil'd to God by the Death Rom. v.
of his Son. — Us, who were Enemies, hath 10.
Christ reconcil'd in the body of his flesh, thro' Col. i. 21.
Death. — He hath made peace thro' the Blood of Col. i. 20.
his Cross, by him, to reconcile all things unto
himself. — God hath reconciled us to himself by 2 Cor. v.
Jesus Christ; — Who suffer'd for Sin, that he 18.
might bring us unto God. — And, we are ac- 1 Pet. iii.
cepted in the Beloved. 18.
Ephes. i.

5. Having reconciled us to God, he SANC- 6.
TIFIES our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to en-
able us to perform our Duty, and thereby to
continue in God's favour. — *We are chosen to* 2 Thes. ii.
Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit. — 13.
and thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, unto Obedi- 1 Pet. i. 2.
ence. — We are sanctified, thro' the offering of Heb. x. 10.
the body of Jesus Christ. — God hath not call'd 1 Thes. iv.
us to uncleanness, but unto holiness, — who hath also 7, 8.
given unto us his Holy Spirit. — The Spirit of Rom. viii.
God dwelleth in us, — and our Body is the Temple 9.
of the Holy Ghost, and we are an habitation 1 Cor. vi.
on of God thro' the Spirit. — We are renew'd 19.
by the Holy Ghost — and quicken'd by the Spi- Ephes. ii.
rit — and strengthen'd with might by the Spirit 22.
in the inner man. — And it is thro' the Spirit Acts ii. 38.
that we mortify the deeds of the body — by which Joh. vi. 63.
deeds, we grieve and quench the Spirit. Ephes. iii.
16.
Rom. viii.

6. He who assists us by his Spirit upon Eph. iv.
Earth, to enable us to do the Will of God, 30.
and thereby to continue in his favour, is our 1 Thes.
constant MEDIATOR, INTERCESSOR, and v. 19.
ADVOCATE with God in Heaven, to pre- Luke xi.
sent 13.

sent our Prayers for the supply of our Wants,
and to obtain a compassionate regard to our
Heb. xii. Failings and Infirmities. *He is the Mediator of*
24. *the New Covenant. — There is one Mediator be-*
1 Tim. ii. *tween God and Man, even the man Christ Jesus.*
5. *He makes Intercession for us at the right hand*
Rom. viii. *of God. — He appears in the presence of God for*
34. *us. — No man cometh unto the Father but by*
Heb. ix. *him — He is able to save them to the uttermost*
24. *who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth*
John xiv. *to make Intercession for them. — If any man Sin, we*
6. *have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the*
Heb. vii. *Righteous. — He is touch'd with the feeling of our In-*
25. *firmities, and therefore let us come boldly to the*
1 John ii. *Throne of Grace, that we may find grace and*
1, 2. *mercy to help in time of need — and let us draw*
Heb. iv. *near with a true heart, and full assurance of*
14. *Faith. — In him we have boldness, and access*
Heb. x. 22. *with confidence.*

7. As it is he, who enables us to do the
Will of God and to preserve his Favour in
this Life, so it is *through him* that we are made
Joh. iv. 14. *partakers of LIFE ETERNAL. The Father*
Luke xix. *sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World — to*
10. *seek and to save that which was lost — that we*
1 John iv. *might live through him — that the World thro'*
9. *him might be sav'd, — that believing, we might*
John xx. *have life thro' his name, — that whosoever be-*
31. *lieveth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting*
Joh. iii. 17. *Life. — Through him we are saved from wrath. —*
Joh. xx. *He hath delivered us from the Wrath to come. —*
31. *Eternal Life is the gift of God, thro' Jesus*
1 Thes. i. 10. *Christ our Lord. — God hath given us Eternal*
Joh. iii 15. *Life, and this Life is in his Son, — who is the*
Rom. v. 9. *Captain of our Salvation — the Author of eter-*
Rom. vi. *nal Salvation to all them that obey him : — Nei-*
23. *ther is there Salvation in any other ; for there is*
1 John v. *neither*
11. *Heb. ii. 10.*
Heb. v. 9. *neither*
Acts iv. 12. *neither*

*none other name under Heaven given among men,
whereby we must be saved.*

What has been said under this Sixth general Head, is a short View of the Christian Institution, both in the Ends it proposes, and the Means for attaining those Ends; and it appears in this View, that the Method which the Gospel lays down for our Salvation, is throughout a consistent and uniform Scheme, worthy of God, and contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom and Goodness for the Comfort and Happiness of Man. It appears also, how unable human Reason was, to direct us either to the *Ends*, or the *Means*, and that however the due Use and Application of our Reason may answer the Purposes of this Life, it is by no means sufficient to guide us in our way to the next.

But if, after God has made so full and clear a Revelation in what way and upon what terms he will save us, Men will resolve to be their own Guides, and refuse to be sav'd in the way that he has appointed; this is at their own peril. If some will believe, that trusting in Christ is their *whole* Duty, and so excuse themselves from the Observation of the moral Law, and others will affirm that the Observation of the moral Law is sufficient, and so will forgo the Benefit of Christ's Redemption; if some will contend that Christ has done all, and others that he has done nothing: to both these it is sufficient to say, that they are very vain and presumptuous in setting up the Opinion and Imagination of weak and fallible Men, against the infallible Testimony of Persons sent and inspir'd by God. The Gospel-Account is as full and express as words can make it, on one hand,

hand, That Faith in Christ is the Foundation of a Christian's *Title* to Heaven, and on the other hand, That Repentance and good Works are necessary Conditions of *obtaining* it.

It may not be improper, before I shut up this Head, to observe that several of our most eminent Divines after the Restoration, set themselves both by Preaching and Writing to enlarge upon the Importance of Moral Duties, and to recommend them with great Earnestness to the Regard of the People; to such a degree, as to stand charg'd by others with too great a Disregard of the Doctrines and Duties peculiar to Christianity. Whereas, the Case in reality was this. During the Times of Confusion, many of the Preachers had not only forborn to inculcate the Duties of Morality, but had labour'd to depreciate them; to perswade the People that Faith was All, and Works Nothing. And therefore the Clergy after the Restoration, in order to take off those unhappy Impressions, found themselves oblig'd to inculcate with more than ordinary Diligence, the Necessity of moral Duties in the Christian Life, and to labour to restore them to their proper Share in the Christian Scheme. But those of them, who with the honest View I have mention'd, labour'd the most zealously in that way, were at the same time as zealous to explain to the People the great Work of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*, as the Means of Salvation which God has appointed: "The Corruption and Misery into which Mankind was sunk by the Fall of our first Parents; "The necessity of a Mediator, to recover them, and restore them to the favour of

Dr. Wil-
kins,
Bar-
row,
Tillot-
son,
Scot.

* Till. vol.
III. 303,
320, 321.
Bar.
Vol. I. 464.
Vol. II. 222.
Vol. III.
228.

* Till. Vol. II. 129. Scot Vol. I. 201. Vol. III. 6.

of God ; ‘ ‘ The Incarnation of the Son of God ^cTill. vol.
 for that end ; ‘ ‘ The Goodness of God in ap- ^{I. 437,}
 pointing his own Son to be the Mediator be- ^{460. v. II.}
 tween Him and Us ; ‘ ‘ The Comfort of having ^{261. Bar.}
 a Mediator of our own Nature ; ‘ ‘ The Expi- ^{v. II. 235.}
 ation made for Sin by the Suffering of Christ ; ^dTill. v. I.
 ‘ ‘ The Wisdom of God in making Christ a Sa- ^{445. Scot.}
 crifice for Sin ; ‘ ‘ The ineffimable value of his ^{v. III. 24,}
 Sufferings, for the Redemption of all Man- ^{42.}
 kind ; ‘ ‘ Our Justification by Faith in him, ^cTill. vol.
 and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and ^{I. p. 471.}
 his Intercession for us at God’s right hand, ^fTill. v. I.
 In general ; what can be more express, than the ^{477. v. II.}
 Doctrine laid down by ^m Archbishop Tillotson, ^{361. Scot.}
 concerning our Redemption by Christ, ‘ That ^{v. III. 187.}
 ‘ Men are to place all their Hope and Confidence ^kTill. v. I.
 ‘ of Salvation in Jesus Christ the Son of God, ^{473. v. II.}
 ‘ that is, to believe that thro’ the alone Merit ^{637. Bar.}
 ‘ of his Death and Sufferings, God is reconcil’d ^{v. I. 464.}
 ‘ to us ; and that, only upon the Account of the ^{v. II. 339.}
 ‘ Satisfaction which he hath made to divine Ju- ^{Scot. vol.}
 ‘ stice, we are restor’d to the Favour of God, ^{III. 167.}
 ‘ and our Sins are pardon’d to us, and we have ^hBar. v. II.
 ‘ a Title to eternal Life. Not but that there ^{313. v. III.}
 ‘ are *Conditions* on our Part to make us capable ^{454.}
 ‘ of these Benefits, Faith and Repentance and ⁱTill. v. III.
 ‘ sincere Obedience and Holiness of Life, with- ^{480. Bar.}
 ‘ out which we shall never be made Partakers ^{v. II. 71.}
 ‘ of them ; but that the Satisfaction of Christ is ^kTill. v.
 ‘ the only *meritorious* Cause of those Blessings, ^{III. 300,}
 ‘ ^{320, 488,}
 ‘ ^{489. Scot.}
 ‘ ^{v. III. 83.}
 ‘ ^{151, 164.}
 ‘ ^{1 Scot. v.}
 ‘ ^{III. 183.}
 ‘ ^mVol. II,
 ‘ ^{p. 488.}

And together with the several Heads of our
 Redemption by Christ, thus explain’d and en-
 larg’d upon by those who had most distinguish’d
 themselves in pressing the Duties of Morality ;
 the People were further instructed by the same
 Persons, That Baptism is an Initiation into a ^{Scot. Vol.}
 new Covenant with God ; and the Lord’s Sup- ^{II. 296.}
 per, ^{v. III. 283.}

per, a Renewal of that Covenant ; and they
 a Til. v. I. were admonish'd by them, ^a of the great Duties
 519, 537 of assembling in the publick Worship of God,
 Scot, v. II. and ^o frequently receiving the Holy Sacrament,
 115.
 o Til. v. I. and ^p hearing and reading the Holy Scriptures,
 248. Scot, as their only sure and complete Rule both of
 v. II. 294. Faith and Practice. Concerning all which,
 p Til. v. I. q one of those Writers, after having describ'd in
 308. v. II. a lively manner the Excellencies of Moral Du-
 243. ties, goes on thus : ' The *Positive* Parts of Re-
 q Scot, v. II. 68. ligion are our Duty as well as these, and
 ' God by his Sovereign Authority exacts them
 ' at our hands ; and unless, when Jesus Christ
 ' hath been sufficiently propos'd to us, we do
 ' sincerely *believe* in him— unless we strike
 ' Covenant with him by *Baptism*, and frequent-
 ' ly renew that Covenant in the *Lord's Supper*—
 ' unless we diligently attend on the *publick As-*
 ' *semblies* of his Worship— there is no pretence
 ' of *Morality* will bear us out, when we appear
 ' before his dread Tribunal.' To which I
 must add, that another of those Divines, who
 wrote an excellent Treatise of *Natural Reli-*
gion (*i. e.* of Principles and Duties *merely*
moral, and such as are discoverable by the
 Strength of Reason exerted and improv'd to
 the highest degree that our natural Faculties
 are capable of) concludes with the fullest De-
 claration of the *Insufficiency* of them to instruct
 us in our Duty, or to enable us to perform it,
 or to conduct us to Happiness, without those
 clear Lights and Supernatural Assistances
 which the Gospel-Dispensation conveys to us.
 Dr. Wil- His words are these. " Notwithstanding all
 kins, l. 2. " that can be said of *Natural Religion*, it
 c. 9. " cannot be denied, but that in this dark
 " and degenerate State into which Mankind

“ is sunk, there is great want of a clearer
 “ Light to discover our Duty to us with
 “ greater Certainty, and to put it beyond all
 “ doubt and dispute what is the good and
 “ acceptable Will of God; and of a more
 “ powerful Encouragement to the Practice of
 “ our Duty, by the Promise of a Supernatu-
 “ ral Assistance, and by the Assurance of a
 “ great and eternal Reward. And all these
 “ Defects are fully supplied by that clear
 “ and perfect Revelation, which God hath
 “ made to the World by our blessed Saviour. ”

And elsewhere he says, ‘ It is not the mere Willk.

‘ Performance of such *moral* Duties as are of Sermon.

‘ Natural Obligation, unless they be done in P. 51.

‘ Obedience to Christ as our *Lord* and *Law-giver*,

‘ and in reliance upon him for his Pardon and

‘ Acceptance as our *Priest* and *Saviour*, that can

‘ make us acceptable to Christ, or entitle us to

‘ the Name of Christians. And speaking of Nat. Rel.

the Salvation of those Heathens who liv’d ac- P. 397.

‘ cording to the Light of Nature, (‘ That when

‘ God hath not thought fit to tell us, how He

‘ will be pleas’d to deal with such Persons, it

‘ is not fit for us to tell Him how He ought to

‘ deal with them; ’) he adds; ‘ Only, of this So also,

‘ we are sufficiently assured, that in all *Ages* Bar.v. III.

‘ and *Places* of the World, all that are saved, P. 449,

‘ are saved by the Mercy of God, and by the 464.

‘ *Merits* of Jesus Christ, who is the *Lamb* slain

‘ from the *foundation of the world*; the Scrip-

‘ ture having expressly told us, *That there is no*

‘ *Salvation in any other*; for there is none other

‘ *name under heaven given among men, whereby we*

‘ *must be saved.* ’

I have already observ'd, that the Duties of Morality were carried by our Saviour to much higher Degrees of Purity and Perfection, than had been practis'd before either by *Jew* or *Gentile*; agreeably to the *pure* and *spiritual* Nature of that Happiness which he reveal'd to Mankind, and the necessity of fitting the Soul for the full Enjoyment of it in the next Life, by habituating ourselves to it, during our Abode in this. And for the same end, we find throughout the New Testament the Practice of Moral Duties enforc'd, and the breach of them discouraged, not so much from Considerations relating to this World, or any *temporal* Benefit accruing from thence to ourselves or others, as

- ' From the *Sanctions* of Duty, which the Civil Relations among *Men* have receiv'd from God,
- ' From the manner of God's Dealing with Men,
- ' From the Example of *Christ* our Lord and Master,
- ' From the Regard we owe to our *Holy* Profession,
- ' From the Relation we bear to *Heaven* while we live here upon Earth,
- ' From the different *Spiritual Sources* of Moral and Immoral Actions, and,
- ' From the Influence which our Regard or Disregard to the Duties of Morality, will have upon our *future* State.

—From the *Sanctions* of Duty, which the Civil Relations among Men have receiv'd from GOD.

Rom. i. Magistrates must be obey'd, not only for wrath,
2, 5. but for *conscience*-sake, because they are the *Ordinance* of God; and they must also conduct themselves towards the People, as the *Ministers* of God to them for good. Husband and
Rom. i. 4. Wife must inviolably adhere to each other,
Mat. xix. 4, 6. because

because they are join'd together and made one by God, who at the beginning made them male and female, and by whom whoremongers and adulterers will be judg'd. Servants are commanded to be obedient to their Masters in singleness of heart, fearing God; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men; and Masters, to be just and merciful to their Servants, as knowing that they also have a Master in Heaven. And, in general, Whatsoever we do, the Gospel enjoins us to do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; and that whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God.

— From the manner of GOD's Dealings with Men. We must be kind to Enemies as well as Friends, because God maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We must forgive one another, because God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. And upon God's having manifested his Love to us in sending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him, is grounded the Inference which St. John makes, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another; and the loving one another, is the most constant and forcible Motive of good Offices to one another.

— From the Example of CHRIST our Lord and Master. Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest to your Souls: And, says the Apostle, Walk in Love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us. — Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; for even Christ pleas'd not himself. — Let nothing be done thro' strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness

lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves : Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others ; Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ

1 Pet. i. 15. Jesus. — As he that hath call'd you, is Holy, so be ye Holy in all manner of Conversation.

— From the regard we owe to our HOLY PROFESSION. Immoralities of all kinds are forbidden to Christians, because they ought to

Ephes. iv. walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are
1, 2, 3. call'd ; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond
1 Thes. ii. of Peace. — They must walk worthy of God,
12. who hath call'd them to his Kingdom and Glory.
Ephes. v. — They must walk as Children of Light. — Their
8. Conversation must be as becomes the Gospel of
Phil. i. 27. Christ. — They must adorn the Doctrine of God
Tit. ii. 10. our Saviour in all things ; and take care that
1 Tim. vi. the Name of God and his Doctrine be not blasphem'd, or evil spoken of, among the Gentiles,
1. through them. — We are to walk honestly (or
Tit. ii. 5. decently) as in the day (the Day-light of the
Rom. xiii. Gospel) not in rioting and drunkenness, not in
13, 14. chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying ; and we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

— From the relation we bear to HEAVEN, while we live here upon Earth. — Our Conversation (or Citizenship) is in Heaven ; and because we are only strangers and pilgrims upon earth, we must abstain from fleshly lusts (the inordinate Enjoyments of this World) which war against the Soul ; and we are also put in mind that we are only sojourners here, and have

Phil. iii. 20.

1 Pet. ii. 11.

Heb. xi. 16.

no continuing City, but seek one to come, that we may not set up our rest in this World, nor be too solicitous about the Things of it, but may have our heavenly Country always in our Eye, and make it our greatest Concern to arrive safely there.

—From the different Spiritual SOURCES of Moral and Immoral Actions. Love, Peace, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, are recommended to our Practice, as fruits of the Spirit, and as the Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intricated, full of mercy and good fruits. But Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Envy, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like, are represented by the Gospel, as works of the flesh, and the fruits of that Wisdom which descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; as proceeding from the Corruptions of Nature without the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and from the Suggestions of the Devil, of whom the Gospel every where warns us as an implacable Enemy to Mankind, who walketh about seeking whom he may devour, and whose wiles and snares we must not hope to escape, but by watchfulness and prayer.

—From the Influence which our regard or disregard to the Duties of Morality will have upon our FUTURE STATE. St. Paul concludes a large Catalogue of Sins, Fornication, Uncleaness, Wrath, Envy, &c. with this just but terrible Sentence, Of which, I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of

of God. On the contrary, the Gospel recom-
 Mat. v. 3. mends the practice of Humility, by ensuring
 to it *the Kingdom of Heaven*; Meekness, because
 1 Pet. iii. it is *in the sight of God of great Price*; Merciful-
 4. fulness, as the Means of obtaining Mercy; Tem-
 Mat. v. 7. perance, as necessary to the running our *Christian*
 1 Cor. ix. *Course* with Success; Purity of Heart, as a neces-
 25. sary Preparation to the *seeing God*; Charity, as it
 Mat. v. 8. is *the laying up in store for our selves a good Founda-*
 1 Tim. vi. *tion against the time to come, that we may attain*
 18, 19. *Eternal Life*; Patience, and Perseverance in
 2 Cor. iv. well doing, because our *light Affliction* which
 17, 18. *is but for a moment worketh for us a far more*
exceeding weight of Glory; While we look not at the
things which are seen, but at the things which are
not seen, because the things which are seen, are
Temporal, but the things which are not seen, are
Eternal.

This is the true Gospel-Morality; which
 makes all the Relations among Men, and the
 Duties belonging to them, to center in God,
 and connects the Offices of this Life with the
 Happiness of the next; and it is no other in
 effect, than that which St. Paul more briefly
 Tit. ii. 11, lays down in the following words: *The Grace*
 12, 13, 14. *of God that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd to all*
Men, Teaching us, that denying Ungodliness, and
worldly lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously
and Godly in this present World; Looking for
that blessed Hope and the glorious appearing of
the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
who gave himself for us, that he might re-
deem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto
himself a peculiar People, zealous of good
Works.

I am aware, that in the View of Christianity I have given under this Sixth general Head, many things are laid down, which some late Writers, who yet disown the Name of Infidels, have with much Confidence pronounc'd to be *Superstition*. And that the same Charge might not be repeated, I judg'd it necessary to shew thus particularly from the plain and express Words of Scripture, that this is no other Superstition than what was taught by Christ and his Apostles. It is indeed to be greatly lamented, that in a Christian Country there should be any need to prove, that the Work of our Redemption by the Death of Christ, with the Benefits thereby obtain'd for us, is a fundamental Doctrine of the Christian Faith. But when we see so much pains taken to represent these things as Corruptions in Religion, We who have the care of Souls, can think no Pains too much to explain and inculcate those great and necessary Truths, by shewing from the whole Tenor of the New Testament, that they are the Means which God himself hath appointed for the Salvation of Mankind.

The Excellence of the Christian Institution, join'd to the Evidences of its divine Authority as set forth in my former Letter, naturally leads,

VII. *To the great Sinfulness and Danger of rejecting it, or, in other Words, to the great Guilt and Perverseness of INFIDELITY.* For tho' it is not in any Man's Power to believe what he pleases, because as things appear at this or that time to his Understanding, so his Belief must be, and we can neither be charg'd with

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Guilt,

Guilt, nor be liable to Punishment, for what we cannot help; yet in searching after Truth, there are two things which are in our power, 'The Use of our Faculties, and 'The *due* and *impartial* use of them; and if we fail of finding out the Truth, or fall into Error, by not using our Faculties at all, or by using them unduly, we are certainly accountable to God who gave them, and who as our Sovereign Lord has a right to require a due use and to punish the Abuse of them. In speculative Matters, which no way concern our Duty or Happiness, Men may be as ignorant as they please without Danger of Guilt; but to be an Infidel in *Religion* thro' Sloth and Carelessness, for want of examining at all, or thro' a slight and superficial Examination, makes Men highly guilty in the sight of God; both as it is a neglect of using and applying the Faculties he has given us, and as it is manifestly contrary to all the Rules of right Reason, not to use them in a matter which so nearly concerns our Safety and Interest; especially, when the Evidences of Christianity lie so open to the general Apprehension of Mankind, and may so easily be enter'd into and understood.

Letter 1st,
p. 21, &c.

No less guilty are they in the sight of God, who in examining the Grounds of Religion, suffer their Minds to be influenc'd by vicious Inclinations, or by Pride and an Affectation of Singularity, or by any immoral and indirect Motive whatsoever. It is every Day's Experience and Observation, how greatly the Judgments of Men are influenc'd in temporal Matters by their own private Conscience, and Interest, and other Considerations

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ons, which do not at all belong to the Matter they are to judge of; and this may be much more suspected in the Judgment they make of the Truth of Christianity, considering how contrary its Precepts are to the inordinate Desires and Inclinations of Nature. We cannot enter into the Hearts of Men, to see upon what Motives they act, and under what Influences they reason; but when we consider the Strength and Clearness of the Evidences of Christianity, with the Advantages and Excellencies of the Gospel-Institution, and the strict Restraints it lays upon Excess and Uncleaness of all Kinds, we cannot but see that it requires the greatest Degree of Charity, to ascribe their Infidelity to any thing, but the Love of Vice, or the Love of Contradiction.

This is what the Apostle calls *an evil Heart of Un-* Heb. 3. 12.
belief; and where that is the Case, Infidelity

is a Sin of the highest Nature; 'As it corrupts the Reason and Understanding which God has given, and subjects it to base and unworthy Influences; 'As it degrades human Nature, and carries in it an *Indifference* whether we be immortal or die like Beasts, or rather a *Desire* that we may die like them; 'As it is an Affront to God, in rejecting his Messengers, who come with clear and evident Testimonies of their being sent by him; 'As it makes him a Liar, and is a manifest Contempt of his Goodness in sending a Revelation, and defeats his gracious Designs and Measures for the Salvation of Man-

kind. Well, therefore, might our Saviour denounce Damnation against all those who did not receive Him and his Doctrine: *He that believeth* Mark 16.
16.

and is baptized, shall be saved, but he that Joh 8.
believeth not, (i. e. disbelieveth) shall be dam- 24.
ned. If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in

- Joh. 3. 18. *your Sins. He that believeth not, is condemn'd already, because he hath not believ'd in the Name of the only begotten Son of God; And this is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men lov'd Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.*
- Joh. 15. 22. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for their Sin. And agreeable to these are the*
- Rev. 21. 8. *Declarations of his Apostles. St. John reckons the Unbelievers among those who shall have their Portion in the Lake that burneth with*
- 2 Thef. 1. 8. *Fire and Brimstone. St. Paul tells us, that God will take Vengeance on them that know him not, and that obey not the Gospel of our*
- Heb. 2. 3. *Lord Jesus Christ; and the Author to the Hebrews, How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them Witness both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy*
- Heb. 10. 28. *Ghost? And, He that despis'd Moses's Law, died without Mercy — Of how much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy Thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of*
- Joh. 3. 36. *Grace? Agreeably to what John the Baptist had declared to the Jews, He that believeth not the Son shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*

I mention these Things, to show the Infidels of our Age, that to believe or not-believe is far from being a Matter of Indifference, as they would

would make it ; and to convince those who are in Danger of being seduced by them, how nearly they are concern'd, before they give up themselves to such Guides, to give the Evidences of Christianity a thorow and impartial Examination. For which End, I recommend to them the three following Tests of Sincerity, 1. That they find their Hearts sincerely dispos'd to embrace any Doctrine, and follow any Rule of Life, that shall appear to come from God. 2. That they inwardly *wish* to find a Religion well-founded, which provides a Remedy for the Corruptions of our Nature, and ensures to good Men a State of Happiness and Immortality after this Life. 3. That they find in themselves no Lust, or other Vice or Passion, which inclines them to *wish* that such a Religion may *not* be well founded. Let but Men, before they enter upon their Examination, put the Heart under these Guards, and I am firmly perswaded there is not the least Danger that Infidelity will ever take hold of it.

But how great soever the Guilt of Infidelity may be, a Zeal to *Promote* it is still greater ; as carrying in it not only all the Aggravations that attend the Disbelief of a Revelation from God, but also great Injustice and Uncharitableness towards Men. He who endeavours to bring others to a Belief of Christianity, approves himself to be a Lover of Mankind, in shewing them the Way to an Eternity of Happiness, and abridging them only of such Enjoyments as would be evidently injurious to their Bodies and Estates, and by making their Minds easy and quiet, in a comfortable Assurance that in all Events they are safe. But the Infidel, while he indulges Men in Enjoyments which the Gospel forbids, cannot *assure* them that there are *not* Rewards and Punishments in another

another World, which will be bestow'd and inflicted by the Rules that the Gospel lays down. And as in all Cases, to endeavour to persuade Men out of the Belief of Things which for ought we know *may* be true, is unfair; so to do this in Matters which nearly concern their Welfare and Interest, is *unjust*. Nor is it only unjust, but also very *uncharitable*, to endeavour to deprive Men of a Belief, upon which the Comfort and Happiness of their Lives depends; unless such Belief were attended with some great Calamity or Misery in other Respects. And further, it is both unjust and uncharitable to *Society* and *Government*, to endeavour to root out of the Minds of Men those powerful Restraints from Wickedness and Violence, that Christianity has laid them under; the Influences of which are a great Security to Peace and Order, and have their Effects in innumerable Cases that human Laws cannot reach. Add to this, that the highest Security that Men can give to one another, is an Oath; which in Christian Countries is taken upon the Holy Gospels. And as the Obligation of the Oath so taken is understood to arise from a Belief of the *Truth* of those Gospels, and of the Threatnings and Judgments denounc'd by them, one cannot well conceive how it should take hold of the Conscience of an Infidel. So that the Promoters of Infidelity, who so evidently weaken if not destroy the Bonds of Society and Government, may well be look'd upon as publick Enemies to Mankind.

'Tis true indeed, in exchange for the Comforts and Advantages they take away from private Persons and publick Societies, they promise a quiet and uninterrupted Enjoyment of Pleasures which the Christian Religion forbids; but in this too they

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they are unjust, in that they promise what they know they are not able to perform. The utmost Progress they can ordinarily hope-for in promoting Infidelity, is to perswade Men that the Gospel Revelation which contains such terrible Threatnings against Lust and Uncleanness of all Kinds, is *not* certainly true; but while they pretend not, to prove that it is certainly *not true*, they cannot free a Course of Voluptuousness from great Mixtures of Doubts and Fears; and these are perpetually reviv'd and heighten'd, by seeing such Numbers of wise and good Men embrace the Christian Faith, and act upon it; giving in their Lives a daily Testimony of their firm Belief of the Truth of it. For tho' this is not a direct Proof that the Gospel is true, it is a great Presumption that there is a *Strength* in the Evidences of the Truth of it, which their Lusts and Passions will not let them see; and, at the same Time, it is a daily Warning to them, that the Contempt of it is too great a Hazard for a wise Man to run; a Warning, that the most hardened Infidel, in his thoughtful Hours, and in the Time of Sickness, Danger, or Distress, is not able to resist.

THE Evidences of the Christian Religion are compris'd under two general Heads, *External* and *Internal*. The External Evidences are those which prove it to be of divine Authority, as, 'The fulfilling of ancient Prophecies in Christ, 'The general Expectation of the Messiah at that Time, 'The Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles, 'His foretelling many Things which punctually came to pass, and, 'The wonderful Propagation of the Gospel after his Death. The Internal Evidences are, 'The Need there was of a Revelation
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from God to instruct and reform Mankind, 'The Fitness of the Gospel Revelation for that end, 'The Excellence of the Doctrins contain'd in it, and, 'The visible Tendency of the whole to the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature and the Happiness of Mankind, in this World and the next.

In this and my former Letter, I have laid before you the Evidences of both Sorts, to guard you against all the Attacks of Infidels, and to keep you stedfast in the Christian Faith; and I beseech you seriously to peruse what I have written for your Use, and to weigh the several Parts of it with Attention and Impartiality, as Matters of the utmost Consequence to you, and more especially necessary to be attended to in these Days, when the Cause of Infidelity is so openly espous'd, and the Advocates for it are so industrious to gain Proselytes. And that God will be pleas'd to give a Blessing to these Endeavours for your spiritual Good, and dispose your Hearts to attend to the Means of your Salvation, and assist you in your Enquiries after the true Way to it, is, and shall be, the hearty Prayer of

Your faithful Friend, and Pastor,

Edm. London.

